

spare Rib

Women's magazine
No.19 20p

Marsha Hunt:
'Step by step
the pawns
can win the
game..'

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**Down Among
the Women**
an extract from
Fay Weldon's novel

**Sex objects-
surprise statistics**

**How to deal
with prowlers**

**The Politics of
Gynaecology**

**Peter Pan-
'No one's gonna
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IN OUR OWN WRITE

Don't slam psychiatry

Dear Spare Rib,

As a loyal reader of your magazine I was greatly disappointed by your article in the No. 14 August issue "Why is liberation an emotional struggle".

Are you suggesting that emancipation is too difficult to cope with and the result is a breakdown?

Liberation is a stimulating factor in women's lives and has the effect of putting them on their mettle. Mental "breakdown" is innate and the causes are still a mystery.

Your portrait of psychiatrists as useless and disinterested people who hand out pills casually is simply a distorted picture and the description of the Mental Health Act 1959, was completely out of context to its true function. As a psychiatric nurse I have found that the doctors who take up psychiatry are usually very concerned with people and have a genuine desire to help them to adjust to their emotional problems.

The case of "Ann" I have encountered only too often; this to me is a typical study of a girl who is a nuisance factor patient who continually interrupts her treatment and has a perverse sort of way of enjoying her depressions, simply by the fact that she drifts from one doctor to another to obtain an opinion indicates that she has no real desire to stabilize herself.

A decision to place a person under a section of the Mental Health Act is never taken lightly, you state that patients were forced to undergo ECT twice a week against their 'expressed desire.' This makes it appear as if ECT is handed out irresponsibly. Obviously anyone in a psychiatric hospital is there for a reason and in fact beds are acutely scarce and it is very difficult to gain admission, therefore any person who is admitted under the Mental Health Act is very seriously disturbed indeed, furthermore psychiatrists are very reluctant to use ECT and in all cases it is used only as a last resort and then only in the most severe and distressing mental illness, these patients are generally so withdrawn that they are quite unable to 'express' any desire at all, let alone object to treatment.

Don't slam psychiatry. The figures for mental illness in urban areas is rising and one in four will at sometime require treatment, so to publish an article pointing out the progress made and the success that can be achieved.

Yours sincerely,
Erika Tyconi
London S W 12

Holiday jobs

Dear Spare Rib,

Why is it that boys who are still in school can get highly paid holiday jobs (which apparently entail little actual work) whereas all I can get is a job as a shop assistant for about £7 a week. Come this summer I need a highly paid short term job so that I can save up enough money to go to India to do unpaid voluntary work. Perhaps some of your readers will be able to suggest something.

Many thanks and best wishes.
Leen
Beilglas Cottage
Llanellan, Abergavenny, Mon.

Unfair to child care

Dear Spare Rib,

Though I am strongly in favour of your magazine and what it is trying to do I don't think that Angela Phillips was being very fair in the way she knocked child care (see Spare Rib issues 14/15/16).

I work in a Local Authority Children's Home and though there are some bad people in this work there are also a lot of people who are doing everything in their power to help the kids.

Though taking children into care must always be regarded as a last resort, it is not always the life of the home that destroys the children. Many children come into care so disturbed that at a very young age it is obvious that they will never be able to lead a full life of their own. A child that has had most of the life beaten out of it in its first few years will never recover.

I will agree that care does not do a child any good. If a child has not been destroyed before going into care then it probably will be before it leaves. This is not a fault of the staff who are doing a hard job with little reward.

Love,
Paul Carey,
Eyres Monsell, Leicester.

Dear Paul Carey,

You say, 'If a child has not been destroyed before going into care then it probably will be before it leaves'. I agree with you. My quarrel is not with individual social workers most of whom presumably went into social work with the intention of helping people. I know there is still a need for some people to be handling out aspirins but it is far more important to cure the disease.

Angela Phillips

Education discrimination

Dear Spare Rib,

I am currently engaged in a project to assess the extent of sexual discrimination in the field of adult education, dealing particularly with

the over 25 age group. If any of your readers have encountered any problems in trying to further their education or have any views or information relating to this matter, I would be interested to hear from them. It appears that no previous detailed research has been undertaken in this area and consequently information is in short supply.

Yours sincerely,

Jean Spence.

Enfield,

Middlesex.

Unmarried teacher mothers

Dear Sir,

We are conducting a survey on the treatment and status of unmarried teacher mothers and the attitudes held towards them by LEAs and Headteachers. This information will be linked to questions dealing with the civil liberties of the teachers concerned and current ideas on the role of the school in our society.

To acquire the facts needed as a basis for this article we have compiled a questionnaire to be sent to as many teachers and ex-teachers as possible in these circumstances. We hope to have the results of this survey published and send them to bodies concerned with education.

If there are any readers to whom this survey applies, i.e. unmarried teacher mothers, who would agree to fill in a questionnaire form, we should be very grateful if they would contact this address. We realize that they may not wish to have their identity publicized and can assure anyone who contacts us that strict anonymity will be observed. Names of teachers replying will be held in confidence and questionnaires will be destroyed after a period of time. No names will be needed on the questionnaire form as code numbers will be used.

We hope that readers concerned will feel that this is a project worth supporting.

Yours faithfully,

Teacher Research Section,

National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child,

255 Kentish Town Road,

London N.W.5.

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Free will

Dear Spare Rib,

We read the article 'The Abortive Facts of Life' (issue no 16) with growing fury: that such a subject should be treated in this biased and superficial way is highly disconcerting. Four points in particular need comment.

1) Angela Briggs stresses a pregnant woman's free will without acknowledging that the woman has already exercised her free will twice: a) in having intercourse and b) in not using a contraceptive. What about the baby? As a human being he has as much right to a free will as his mother.

2) To equate human life with the cutting of hair is emotive journalism at its worst.

3) One of us, as a social worker, notes the selective use of facts about abortion. No mention is made of the danger to the girl's future health; eg. a hysterotomy involves the risk of the womb bursting in a later pregnancy.

4) Every child conceived in this country is wanted by someone, as one look at the adoption societies' waiting lists will confirm.

To those who argue that the country is over populated we answer that an individual seriously worried about over population would use contraception responsibly.

Yours sincerely,

Catherine Enright, Rosemary Read, Jo Gordon
Clapham, SW4.

Angela Briggs writes:

I did allow for the fact that free will is normally exercised in having intercourse and in contraception, though of course this is not invariably the case - with rape, for example, or where contraceptives are not available. I ask you to bear two points particularly in mind, here. Firstly, if women were to have intercourse only when they wanted a child, it would mean that most of us would make love about half a dozen times, and during two pregnancies, throughout our fertile years (roughly 12 to 50). Women who did not want children would have to remain totally celibate, heterosexually. Secondly, current methods of contraception are not reliable for

everyone. I have met one woman so fertile that she conceived despite a coil and the pill!

What about the baby? The short answer to this is that an embryo or foetus, unviable outside the womb, cannot properly be described either as a baby or as a human being, in our normal usage of these terms. It is simply a potential.

I have had several letters objecting to my analogy with hair, some pointing out that hair is not 'alive' in the sense that its roots are. But I think that this proves my point about how difficult it is to draw the line. A hair once cut from its root will cease to grow - as will an embryo once separated from its root - the nurturing body of the woman. My argument thus stands - if the foetus is not viable without her, she should be the one to decide what happens.

On your third point I did mention, indeed, that the dangers from abortion were greater than was often admitted. But there is no evidence that there are more risks from abortion (properly performed) than from childbirth - or from hysterotomy as opposed to a caesarian section.

I agree that it is nice for childless couples to be able to adopt unwanted babies. But the choice of whether to bear a child for adoption or to have an abortion, should rest with the prospective mother. I submit, with respect, that it is no part of a civilised society to use any woman as a baby-factory, without regard for her feelings in the matter.

May I add that many of the arguments I hear against abortion seem to be based on a punitive attitude towards women who, for one reason or another, conceive when they do not really want a child. Through luck and judgment I, personally, have never yet become pregnant, but I have no wish to punish those who do, as I recognise that everyone is different, mentally and physically, and that no one is entirely in control of her life, however much she may try to be.

Are you suggesting that if a woman has behaved irresponsibly, she should then be forced to bear a child she does not want? Because at that point I must ask, if she keeps it (and many would), what is going to happen to that child? Or is she/he supposed to suffer too?

Masturbation and isolation

Dear Spare Rib,

Firstly, in the usual style, I shall exonerate myself by declaring I am an ardent fan of Spare Rib, Women's Lib... but I do have a complaint to make regarding the apparent attitude of your magazine towards masturbation. I admit, it is probably not harmful, and is a cause of great relief, comfort, etc, but surely a magazine whose theme is the liberation of human beings cannot seriously advocate masturbation (on a long term basis). Let's face it, an orgasm shared, has got to be an improvement on an orgasm achieved alone. So, my complaint is that instead of telling people to stop worrying about masturbating - why not be realistic and tell them to go find another human being to relate to.

There are a lot of males (frustrated ones also) who do have a penis (a madly sensitive organ) which is great for stimulating a woman's madly sensitive organs. It's my belief that there are too many females who use the excuse of their 'moral standards' for not sharing their orgasms when in fact it is fear of losing their identity, this fear that they mustn't share their (beautiful, special, etc) body (these EGOTISTIC females), with just anyone... and so instead they achieve an orgasm in their own privacy and retain both their dignity, moral standards and continue in their pursuit of perfection.

Well that's just my humble opinion. Thank you for listening (if you did).

Sincerely Maggie

Manchester

Deprived of Women's poetry

Dear Spare Rib,

My daughter has recently commenced at the local (single sex) grammar school: the same as I attended myself, many moons ago, but left at sixteen and a half. In connection with her English homework she brought home an anthology of poetry called "Touchstones 1", published by English Universities Press Ltd., quite recently. It is a very enlightened book in every way and beautifully illustrated. There are some Japanese Haiku poems and one by Spike Milligan.

But of all these 123 poems there is only one poem included that has been written by a woman (Frances Cornford, to name names). Perhaps this should be expected from two male authors, and also male editors. But even the old Oxford Book of English Verse did better than that.

Now I concede that, for reasons they could not help, there have been fewer great women poets than male in the past. But I think it is very valuable and important that girls should have every opportunity to study the best of women's writing; poetry written by men is written from quite a different point of view and one that it is more difficult for the woman to relate to, or, and this is what it's all about really - find inspiration from. I had left school a long way behind when I discovered Sylvia Plath and Stevie Smith: but they mean a lot to me now.

There is room for poetry by both sexes and girls should have available to them the opportunity to learn from both.

Anyway, who ARE the decision makers, with regard to school text-books?

Maybe there are too few women.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Muriel E. Smith,
Beckenham, Kent

Cover photograph of Marsha Hunt by Suze

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Please send a stamped addressed envelope with all unsolicited manuscripts.

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This album is dedicated to the sisters who died in pain and sorrow and those who are now in prisons and in mental hospitals for being unable to survive in the male society.

DOWN AMONG THE WOMEN

Fay Weldon's novel 'Down among the Women' is set in the early 50's when the feminine mystique was at its highest. With bitter humour she describes the effect it had on our lives and how we related to each other. The novel charts the meetings between a group of women - who alternately confide and compete, love and hate, envy and despise each other.

... Wanda's flat, at the present time, is two rooms and a kitchen in Belsize Park. It won't be for long. Wanda has moved twenty-five times in the last forty years. She is sixty-four now. Rents go up and up. Not for Wanda the cheap security of a long-standing tenancy. Wanda turns her naked soul to the face of every chilly blast that's going: competes in the accommodation market with every long-haired arse-licking mother-fucking (quoting Wanda) lout that ever wanted a cheap pad.

Wanda's flat then, twenty years ago, when we begin Byzantia's story, was two rooms and a kitchen in another part of Belsize Park. Some women have music wherever they go, Wanda has green and yellow lino. Scarlet, who at this time is twenty, has been sleepwalking on this lino since she was five and last felt the tickle of wall-to-wall Axminster between her toes. That was before Wanda left her husband Kim in search of a nobler truth than comfort.

The lino used to be lifted, rolled, strung, tucked under some male arm and heaved into the removal van. Presently it cracked and folded instead of curling itself gracefully, and the male arms became impatient and scarcer, so Wanda hacked it into square tiles with a kitchen knife, and now when it's moved it goes piled, and Wanda carries it herself. Amazing how good things last. The lino belonged in the first place to Wanda's lover's wife. This lady, whose name was Millie, bravely threw it out along with the past when she discovered about Wanda and her husband Peter - Peter for short, Peterkin for affection - but depression returned, sneaking under the shiny doors (three coats best gloss, think of that, in wartime!), slithering over the purple Wilton (pre-war stock), grasping poor Millie by the neck and squeezing until she died of an asthmatic attack.

Wanda and Scarlet are preparing for the Thursday meeting of Divorcées Anonymous. The year being 1950, a group such as this is a rarity, and its lady members the more amazed at their fate. . . . Scarlet is nine and a quarter months pregnant: she is heavy, but she glows, she is twenty; she has to reach out over her belly to butter the water biscuits and arrange the wedges of basic cheddar with which each is topped.

Listen, now. Wanda sings as she scours the coffee pot. This is before the days of instant coffee. She will use Lyons coffee and chicory mixture, which comes in a blue tin. Wanda is a large, heavy-boned, unpretty woman with a weathered skin, and eyes too deep and close together for their owner to be taken as anything other than troublesome. In an age when women still walk with toes pointed delicately outwards, Wanda strides ahead, and makes others nervous. Let her granddaughter Byzantia, now curled head-down inside Scarlet, be grateful. Oh fuck! cries Wanda hopefully; oh bugger! she complains, in the days when words could still be wicked, and so she helps bring about a new world.

No wonder she has no husband; no wonder the Divorcées Anonymous munch her hideous water biscuit offerings with such helpless disdain . . .

Listen, now. Wanda sings as she scours the coffee pot. Thinks herself lucky to have coffee. Millions in Europe still do not.

'Ta-ra-ra boom de-ay

Did you have yours today?

I had mine yesterday,

That's why I walk this way-'

Scarlet is disconcerted. Scarlet is offended. Scarlet, impressed by the workings of her own body, is having a fit of sanctimonious motherhood. Scarlet believes - for this one suspended week - in love, life, mystery, meaning, sanctity. Byzantia lies very quiet and kindly allows her mother these few days of illusion. She is seven days late. Scarlet thinks she is a boy. So does Wanda.

'I know it's a boy,' said Scarlet, in the sixth month. 'But what can you possibly know about it?'

'It's a burden,' said Wanda, simpering, 'It's a boy.'

Scarlet gritted her teeth and folded herself metaphorically around her precious burden, which kindly went patter patter patter beneath her ribs. When the doctor asked her if the baby had quickened she said she didn't know. She felt something sometimes but thought it might be indigestion. He looked at her as if she was a fool, reinforcing her own opinion of herself.

Wanda sings. The coffee pot is scoured. It shines in tinny splendour, worn thin by wire wool. This is before the days of detergents for the masses. The rivers of England still flow cool, clear and sweet. The towns are filthy; they have gone twelve years without paint, but in the country the hedgerows grow green and thick, still unperverted by insecticides, and the blackberries are glorious. Wanda and Scarlet would rather die than live in the country. Wanda tells horror stories of the fate of women who have done so.

'Don't sing that,' says Scarlet.

'Poor little Scarlet,' says Wanda, 'poor baby. Did it have a nasty rude Mummy then?'

'Yes.'

'Opportunity would be a fine thing,' says Wanda. 'Breathes there the man with soul so dead who would not kick your mother out of bed?' She is unkind to herself. At forty-four she is at her most handsome: little men like her. She does not like little men. She waits, and will wait for ever for a tall handsome bully who will penetrate her secret depths.

'Can't stand men with little cocks,' she cries, but what she means is, if only there was someone who would stay long enough to listen, go deep to touch my secret painful places, so I would feel again I was alive.

And how is Scarlet to know this? Scarlet sees a rude, crude

mother. Scarlet scowls.

'What kind of mother are you anyway?' she asks.

'Bad,' replies Wanda, with satisfaction, and Scarlet moans in outrage. Wanda is egged on. She sings again.

'Ta-ra-ra boom de-ay,

Have you had yours today?

I had mine yesterday,

That's why I walk this way.'

'I feel sick,' says Scarlet. Her face has altogether lost its look of cosmic satisfaction; it nods mean and crabbed on top of her swollen body. She slices radishes stolidly in half, instead of bothering to carve them into the pretty flower shapes she normally makes.

'Good,' says Wanda.

Scarlet's eyelids droop lower. She's in a full-scale sulk. Nothing annoys her mother more. Scarlet has a round smooth face; her mother thinks she looks half-witted; certainly the more angry and miserable she becomes, the more stolid she appears.

'Pull yourself together,' says her mother sharply. 'Don't look like that.'

'Look like what?' Scarlet draws.

'Like I'll have to support you for the rest of my life, let alone your bloody bastard.'

'Every harsh word you speak,' says Scarlet, 'goes flying off into infinity, to bear witness against you.'

Wanda can't bear such statements. Scarlet has become very good at making them. Wanda sings again.

'Please,' says Scarlet, 'Or you'll bring it on.'

'What else do you think I'm trying to do?' asks Wanda. 'Their brains get short of oxygen if they're overdue, don't you even know that? Yours will need all the I.Q. points it can muster, I imagine. I am doing you a favour. Shall I tell you the story of the milkman, the lady, and the letter-box?'

'No,' says Scarlet.

Wanda tells the story.

'There was once a randy young milkman,' says Wanda, 'who was accustomed to calling on a certain lady at seven in the morning, when he was half-way through his delivery round. The lady's husband was on night duty. For a time all went well, in fact so well that the milkman, reluctant to miss a second of his precious time, would unzip himself as he ran up the garden path. He would then thrust his you know what through the letter-box so that she wouldn't mistake him for another and open the door, all naked and waiting, to some stranger. One day, alas, the door was opened not by her, but by none other than her husband. Was the milkman taken aback? Only for a second. "If you don't pay your fucking bill," cried the milkman, "I'll piss all over you."'

Scarlet doesn't even smile. Wanda feels depressed. The coffee pot is boiling. She turns it upside down to filter it through; something inside goes wrong and boiling coffee bubbles over her hands.

Wanda, stoical to the point of mania, does not scream or even complain, but holds her poor red hand under the tap.

'I wish you'd grow old gracefully,' says Scarlet presently.

'I wish you'd grow old,' says Wanda, with bitterness. 'I wish you'd grow old and see what it's like.'

'You're not old,' says Scarlet with unexpected kindness. Perhaps she is touched by her own good nature. At any rate she starts to cry.

'What's the matter with you?' asks Wanda, surprised. She can't bear to see Scarlet cry. She thinks it might start her off too, and Wanda hasn't cried since the day before she left Kim, Scarlet's father, back in 1935.

So Wanda sings, sweetly, as a benison, the mellifluous notes of Brahms' lullaby.

'Hush, my little one, sleep,

Fond vigil I keep,

Lie warm in thy nest

By moonbeams caressed -'

Scarlet stops crying. She thinks perhaps Wanda means it.

Something shifts in her universe. Cog wheels unlock, relock. The universe continues, but differently. What is happening? Her baby turning, unlocking? The waters shifting, slopping, heaving? No, it is the fact that Wanda is being sentimental.

Scarlet gapes.

'Shut your mouth, for God's sake,' says Wanda, and Scarlet obligingly closes it, for she has seen a tear in Wanda's eye and is frightened. Wanda, of course, has no mascara to run. Wanda wears brilliant lipstick, to give more shape and vehemence to her words, but otherwise has no time for make-up, which she sees as cowardice. It is a pure and leathery cheek which the tear runs

down, and still only forty-odd years since she was born so tender, smooth and throbbing.

'I wish,' says Wanda hopelessly, 'I wish things didn't have to be the way they are. Why did you have to go and do it?'

It is as well the bell rings, because Scarlet is feeling quite sick from insecurity. She can bear her mother's anger, spite and indifference, and can return them in kind, but she cannot bear her mother to be unhappy. . .

. . . Scarlet's father Kim Belcher lives on the fourth floor of a red-brick Edwardian block of flats off Baker Street. Scarlet walks up and down outside for some few minutes. She is a conspicuous figure, for she does not own any maternity clothes. She wears an old skirt of Helen's, dating from the days when Helen was fat, and a Fair Isle jersey which Lettice knitted for Wanda decades ago, which Wanda did not like and would not wear. It is both unbecoming and indestructible, a terrible confection. Scarlet's coat is her own, and held together beneath her bosom by an ill-concealed safety-pin; it divides at this point over the swell of her stomach like a pair of theatrical curtains framing a stage. Her shoes are down at heel and her lisle stockings fraying where they have been darned . . . So Scarlet demonstrates her misfortune to the world.

She will go to her father, and she will say unto him, 'Father behold thy child.'

She has already said it on the telephone, mind you, and though he has been polite, he has not been encouraging.

Yet if she, his child, asks for bread, will she be given a stone?

Quite possibly. Kim, like Wanda, does not read the Bible. Kim has a strong sense of survival. Besides, Kim has replaced his daughter with a child wife.

Scarlet is nervous and feels like crying. Her legs will not take her up the steps. She gets cramp in a calf and has to stand on tip-toe and raise and lower herself two or three times before the pain goes. She is afraid of overbalancing. She is in a nightmare. Pretty soon, she thinks if things go on like this, she will be obliged to wake up. What age is she, having this dream of a projected, impossible future? Six? Seven?

But her mother has said, 'Ask your father.' It is not just permission, it is a command.

She decides to telephone. She searches her pockets for three pennies. There are handkerchiefs (no tissues, they do not exist) a medical card or two, her blood grouping (O) and a half-crown and a couple of farthings which would be worth fifteen shillings if only she had them today.

Scarlet is obliged to go into two cafés and have two cups of tea and two buns before she can accumulate three coppers. It is not in Scarlet's nature to ask for change. Wanda has trained her too well to expect anything but nothing from nix. Scarlet herself will do a favour for anyone: and she can ask the enormous ones of others (look at her now, demanding recognition) but the little ones are beyond her. She cannot ask strangers the time or for change for the telephone. The buns - bright yellow from dried egg - give her heartburn.

Kim does not answer the telephone. He is out. Susan Watson answers it, in her refined little voice, with its careful vowels. Her mother voice-trained her on the voyage back from New Zealand - where they had spent the war - so as not to disconcert Mr Watson, Susan's father and now Kim's boss, with the closed nostril taint of New Zealand speech.

Scarlet is taken aback. She had assumed Susan to be a stage prop, not a real person. She has never answered the telephone to Scarlet before. Scarlet has accepted Susan in Kim's bed - a marionette to be wound up at bedtime and perform - but not as someone with power, opinions, or even feelings.

Susan too is taken aback. But she is welcoming, even eager. Kim is out. But why doesn't Scarlet come round? Scarlet says she'll be there in two minutes.

Susan has a pretty round doll's face, set in a sweet expression, and an obliging disposition.

Susan thinks it's marvellous to be married to Kim: she loves playing houses; she even loves Kim.

Susan despises Kim's former wives for having failed to make him happy.

Susan is envious that Kim has a past and she has not. Sometimes she worries lest she too, should become part of Kim's past.

Susan likes being so much younger than Kim. It is the same kind of showing off as she has always done, from puffed sleeves as a little girl when no one else had them, to passing round the telegram at school which said her brother had been killed in action. ►



Susan wants now to show off in front of Scarlet. She has so much; and poor Scarlet - daughter of Witch Wanda - has so little. She got to University, true, but when was a clever woman ever happy? So Susan's mother said when Susan failed her school certificate. Clever women don't make good wives, and in good wifedom lies happiness. So spoke Susan's mother, lying on a beach in New Zealand, while her husband did fire-duty thirteen and a half thousand miles away . . .

. . . Susan is eight and three-quarter months pregnant. She has been married nine months. Kim had to marry her, not because they had f- (Susan has barely heard the word, ever) and she was pregnant but because she wouldn't before they were married.

Susan's mother said not to. Now Susan's mother knits little woollies and nudges her husband to make Kim a full partner in the firm; he has already done so but she never listens. Or if she does, she soon forgets.

Down among the women, if you are very very careful, and shut your eyes and ears, and keep your knees together nearly always, you can live really quite happily. Susan's mother does. It was Susan's brother, not Susan's mother's son, who was killed in action. That at any rate is how Susan's mother always refers to him. Poor Susan's brother. Not even Susan's poor brother.

Susan shows no outward signs of deserving pity. Even now, as she opens the door to Scarlet, her face barely changes - she smiles sweetly on.

Scarlet faints.

Byzantia, noticing a change in her environment, prepares to abandon it. (Nothing will make Simeon - Kim's son, Byzantia's uncle, poor Susan's dead brother's nephew - leave Susan except the due processes of time, pressure and the conjugation of the stars. A ritualist now, and always will be, whatever the inconvenience to others.)

'Oh dear,' says Susan. It is her strongest expression. No wonder Kim, having lived through Wanda, is so devoted to her. He has not yet had time to grow bored. Presently he will get into the habit of saying he's going to die of boredom, and presently indeed he will. But that's a long way off.

Susan spent seven years in New Zealand, where girls are expected to be practical, so she drags Scarlet inside, and heaves her on to the couch. She has never seen anyone so untidy. Even Scarlet's stomach, Susan notices, is lopsided. Perhaps Scarlet is going to have a lopsided baby? Scarlet wears a wedding ring. It leaves a green stain. Woolworth's, thinks Susan, who is knowledgeable, as well as practical, as well as nice, and often shops at Woolworth's where you get good value for money. She has a streak of parsimony.

Susan feels a surge of pity for this poor messy Scarlet, her step-daughter, who has clearly ruined her life. The pity is maternal in its essence. And vengeful against dreadful Wanda, who not only once made Kim unhappy, but without doubt has failed as a mother.

Susan explained to the reviving Scarlet that Kim is out; he will be back within the hour. In the meantime Scarlet, who looks dreadfully pale (she probably hasn't even been taking her iron tablets), must stay where she is and rest.

'I'm sorry,' says Scarlet vaguely, 'to inconvenience you.' The carpets here, she observes, are thick and soft. At home there is only green and yellow lino.

It is quite a long time before Scarlet speaks. Then all she says is, 'Mrs Belcher, I presume.'

Kim's surname is Belcher. It is the cross - along with the complications of his past - that Susan has to bear; she carries it bravely. Wanda reverted the moment she could to her maiden name, Rider, and Scarlet used this too. Every now and then, if Scarlet complains too bitterly of her lot, Wanda suggests she reverts to her father's name. Scarlet Belcher. Scarlet declines. Scarlet Rider is a good name and one of the reasons why the father of Byzantia took her home from a party, drunk and dismal as she was.

'Don't try to talk,' says Susan. 'Just lie a little. There's lots of time.'

Scarlet shuts her eyes and tries to contain her rage. Susan just sits with her hands folded and continues to smile.

Scarlet peeks.

She's working out a knitting pattern, thinks Scarlet.

But Susan is off where she always goes when she has a minute to spare, and times are tense. She is walking through the silent kauri forests of New Zealand. Clematis creepers trail down from the high branches. What light there is catches on its white starry flowers.

The trunks are dark, smooth and immense. There is thick moss underfoot. It is primeval forest - no birds, no animals, no sound.

Just Susan, back at the beginning of time.

Scarlet calls her back.

'I don't think there is much time,' says Scarlet enigmatically, more to frighten Susan than because she believes for one moment she is about to give birth. Susan enquires when the baby is due. No baby, surely, can be more nearly due than hers, in six and a half days.

'Last week,' replies Scarlet, as is her pleasure. Susan, for the first time, is put out. Scarlet's baby's aunt should surely arrive first. (She is as convinced she is having a girl as Scarlet is that she is having a boy.)

'You mean you might have it any minute?' her voice squeaks a little. She remembers her mother's training and lowers it a little. They had a dreadful journey back from New Zealand - in an unconverted troopship. Susan's mother caught dysentery and conjunctivitis but managed to ignore even these inconveniences. Still she paced the deck with the other mothers, released *en masse* from the dreadful provincial prison of war-time New Zealand, drilling offspring in 'The Rain in Spain', and other niceties of pre-war England. Susan's mother was not so much brave as obstinate.

'Any minute,' says Scarlet. 'I keep getting these pains.'

'We'd better get the ambulance.' Susan keeps her voice pitched low.

'They're only pains,' says Scarlet crossly. 'They'll go away. They always have before. I can't stand women who make a fuss.'

The only harsh word Kim has so far said to Susan is, 'For God's sake, don't fuss,' Susan is silenced. Scarlet swings her legs over to touch the floor and sits on the edge of the sofa, and smiles and smiles, which encourages poor Susan.

'Is this - um - just a social visit?' enquires Susan, with antipodean awkwardness.

'I have come to visit my father,' states Scarlet.

'Yes. Of course. How nice. But do you need anything?'

The question is too enormous for Scarlet to answer; in any case she has another pain and wants to go home; but Belsize Park seems too far away to be reached; and has not her mother sent her here?

The feeling grows that if she goes back home now she will never, ever get away. She continues to sit brightly, tightly upright and begins to dread her father's return. How can she explain herself to this stranger? If she stops smiling she will cry.

Susan makes a pot of tea, conscious of Scarlet's need, but praying that Kim will return and make everything all right again. Simeon kicks and she cries out, startled, and nearly drops the kettle. She has a vision of those white pure feet of hers raw, blistered and disfigured for ever. She trembles.

Susan hovers for a moment on the borders of that other terrible world, where chaos is the norm, life a casual exception to death, and all cells cancerous except those which the will contrives to keep orderly; where the body is something mysterious in its workings, which swells, bleeds, and bursts at random; where sex is a strange intermittent animal spasm; where men seduce, make pregnant, betray, desert: where laws are harsh and mysterious, and where the woman goes helpless.

Susan, in fact, nearly leaves the girls and comes down here among the women.

She thinks of her mother and survives, hauling herself out of the mire, using a lace doily as a foothold. She lays it on a tray and makes Scarlet lemon tea. There is a fine sweat on Scarlet's brow. Still she sits upright, tightly smiling . . .

. . . The ribbon tightener gets bored and Scarlet gets a backache instead, tedious, frightening and unnatural. She puts her legs back carefully on the couch, and groans. It is apparent now, even to Scarlet, that she is about to have a baby. She is panic-stricken. This was hardly what she had meant to happen. If she had only believed in a Heavenly Father she would have implored him now to take his gift back. As it is she can only mutter, after her earthly mother, oh fuck, oh shit, hell's teeth.

Scarlet has for some time been considered by her friends as a girl of loose sexual morality. It is not true. Until she went sulking to a party on the day she read in a newspaper of her father's wedding, actual intercourse had eluded her. Partly because offers were few, partly because those there were she ignored in order to annoy Wanda, who had fought so fiercely for the sexual rights of the rising generation. Who will believe that Scarlet lost her virginity and got pregnant on the same lamentable occasion? When she was, alas, so drunk she can hardly remember the incident at all? To be so pregnant and so unpleasured seems hardly fair.

She calls out for Susan, who, having made tea, is now on the telephone forlornly trying to trace Kim; who has been on the telephone trying to trace Wanda, who is out; who has inefficiently ►

tried to call an ambulance - Scarlet having left her hospital card at home, naturally - and been informed that without the card ambulances can only be summoned by a doctor; who has tried to raise her own doctor, to be met by an answering machine - surely the first in London, and paralysing to the will.

(Susan is having her baby privately, at home, and the doctor, Mr Joseph Justice, is a rich and go-ahead man.)

Now there are messages for help left all over London but still Scarlet lies on Susan's couch and prepares to give birth. Susan is mismanaging the whole situation disgracefully.

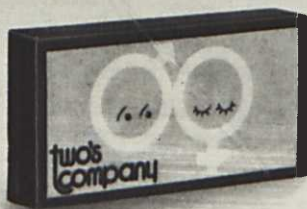
And what will Kim say?

Susan goes to the bookshelves and takes down a book on progressive childbirth. It once belonged to Wanda. It was written in the 1920s and the photographs disturb her. The women look like her mother - the same swoop of hair over the forehead, the same small smile, the same hairless, marble limbs. She has wondered why Kim keeps it, wondered the more at herself for not throwing it away. For Susan does not believe in the written word, she believes in her Mr Joseph Justice. But alas, Mr Joseph Justice has gone fishing or whatever, leaving on an answering machine in his place. She turns to the section marked 'Deliveries *au naturel*' and returns to Scarlet.

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'Get the police,' says Scarlet.

'The expectant mother often panics,' reads Susan aloud, 'and believes the birth more imminent than in fact it is.'

'Get the neighbours,' says Scarlet.

'Have the waters burst?' enquires Susan.

'What waters?' asks Scarlet.

'The womb is filled with a clear water-like liquid,' says Susan.

'Before you can have the baby it all comes out. Has it?'

'I don't know,' mutters Scarlet. 'I've no idea. I went to the toilet and everything seemed very wet but I don't know. My mother still wets her knickers, perhaps I just take after her.'

Susan winces.

'It doesn't sound like the waters,' says Susan.

'By the waters of Babylon,' moans Scarlet, 'we sat down and wept.'

Susan concludes she is wandering in her mind.

'Do you have a show?' she enquires, reading on.

'What's that?' asks Scarlet, who has read nothing about childbirth, believing herself to be so natural, normal, and healthy that the details can hardly concern her . . .

. . . 'It says here a show,' says Susan forlornly, 'but it doesn't say what a show is.'

'You are a fool,' says Scarlet, and Susan feels indignation, until, reading on, she discovers that women in childbirth often show signs of irritation.

The pain in Scarlet's back evaporates. She feels better, gets up, walks about, announces it was a false alarm.

'Shall we get a taxi to a hospital?' asks Susan tentatively.

'No,' says Scarlet. 'I've never taken a taxi in all my life. I don't approve of them. I'm perfectly well and healthy.'

'Perhaps you'd better get home while you can,' says Susan, with dismal cunning. She, who once felt so possessive of Scarlet, so charitable, so condescending, can now hardly wait to get her out of her territory.

'Home?' enquires Scarlet. 'What home?' and watches with pleasure the blood surging into Susan's face. Perhaps Susan is going to cry.

'When you think of it,' says Scarlet, 'this is as much my home as anywhere else. My father's place.'

'You are not a child,' says Susan, made quite sharp by desperation. 'You ought to have a home of your own by now.'

Scarlet is dejected and deflated by the truth of this observation.

She feels very strange in her body, and wants to go to the lavatory.

'I'll just go to the loo,' she says. 'Then I'll get the bus home.'

'Perhaps you should,' says Susan.

'You just want me to have it in the street, don't you?' complains Scarlet, going into the bathroom, where Susan's baby's pretty bath and Susan's baby's fragrant toiletries wait for the arrival of their user. Susan waits for retribution. It comes. Scarlet opens the door briefly and remarks, 'My baby's going to be bathed in the sink, along with the saucepans. We can't afford this kind of thing.'

Susan runs headlong into her dark kauri but it has shrunk: she is only there five seconds before she is out the other side and into brilliant sunshine again. It is Scarlet's fault.

Susan is angry.

If Scarlet could only have been humble and grateful, had only asked favours, how happy Susan could have been, sharing baby vests, lending nappies, offering advice, arranging an adoption perhaps - even adopting herself, taking in instead of pushing away her husband's past - and all out of the public kindness of her heart. But Scarlet won't accept favours. Scarlet has come claiming her rights, and now Susan feels threatened, and frightened, and unprotected. Susan cries out in her heart against Kim for not being there when she needs him. Yet she dreads his return. She had wished to surprise him with her own generosity and understanding; she sees now that what she will surprise him with is a terrible, hideous encumbrance. . . .

. . . Susan has a small and tidy pregnancy under a pretty spotted smock. You would never have known Susan was pregnant until well into the fifth month. Simeon curls tightly, tightly, never giving way, seldom flailing, only occasionally aiming an irritable blow against the pulpy walls of his confinement.

Susan nearly telephones her mother, but knows her mother will have 'flu or people round. There is a 'flu epidemic. Susan's mother is a sucker for minor ailments, thus preserving herself against the sudden major killers. Perhaps she'll live for ever, this bourgeois monster? Susan's mother would leave Susan in prams outside the shops, sometimes for hours, going home by herself and forgetting she'd come out with pram and baby. On the day Susan got married

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Unequal footing

A survey of shoes as sex and status symbols by Linda Allison

small for her. Then her mother gave a knife and said: 'Cut the toe off, when thou art queen thou wilt no more need to go on foot.' The maiden cut the toe off, forced the foot into the shoe, swallowed the pain, and went out to the King's son. Then he took her on his horse as his bride and rode away with her. (Grimm Household Tales 1884)

The original uncut version of Cinderella has the prince return the bloody bride, only to ride away with the second sister, less a heel amputated by her ambitious mother. The sister with the maimed foot is in the end exchanged for Cinderella, triumphant by virtue of her small feet.

The function of shoes is protection, but from this fairy tale we begin to suspect that there are other forces afoot shaping our shoes. Indeed, a survey of the history of footwear shows us that the anatomy of shoes has little to do with the human foot.

Shoes have been a means of identifying class and profession; becoming not only a status symbol but also a sexual symbol. Psychoanalytically they symbolise the female genitals (drinking champagne from a lady's shoe). And, with high heel and extended toe, they are simultaneously phallic. The status and sexual symbolism interweave throughout the history of footwear - with

women usually feeling the pinch.

This was not as true in the Fourteenth century when women carried on clothing production before the separation of domestic and industrial life. Women shoemakers were known as sauteresses. At that time it was the man's shoe which started to sprout long and pointed toes which became an unwieldy badge of wealth and leisure. These phallic protruberances culminated in the Fifteenth century with the wearing of 'poulines' or 'crackows' reaching out into points of sometimes more than a yard. In 1420 a law was passed which emphasised the role of the shoe as status symbol; anyone earning less than £40 per annum was forbidden to wear long shoes. Such excesses in dress could only be associated with excesses in character, or so felt the clergy. They appealed to the pope, who responded with an edict prohibiting shoes longer than 11 inches.

By the end of the sixteenth century in England a far more potent symbol of social status for a man was the possession of an inactive wife. Once a man was able to gain status by showing his ability to support a housebound woman of leisure, shoes began to be designed to incapacitate women.

Stilted shoes, which came into vogue during the 1590s, slowed a woman down and simultaneously raised her in the eyes of the world - which of course meant raising her husband as he owned and supported her. The Syrians produced a stilted shoe called a kubkab. Bernard Rudofsky writes in *The Unfashionable Human Body*, 'Their charm lies in their instability, the sight of a woman

walking precariously closely corresponds to a man's image of female helplessness.' The great shoes made their entrance into Europe by way of Venice. They were called chopines, and were worn by noblewomen. Made of wood, sometimes reaching a yard in height, they made motion impossible without the aid of servants.



A Venetian woman wearing chopines (from Pietro Bertelli's *Diversarum Nationum Habitus*)

In England the chopine's antecedents were the clogs or pattens worn by agricultural workers to life the foot out of the mud in the village street. Mrs Haweis in her book *Art of Beauty* of 1878, regretted that Victorian women didn't wear clogs or pattens. In wet weather, she writes, 'there is a general smashedness of head-gear and vagueness of outline to the feet. What can one expect when the 'little mice' are covered up in galoshes? Ah woe to the man who invented that gutta percha penance; why did he not elevate the gentle sex on pattens? Now they must not only descend into the depths, but in addition be swelled to *unnatural* proportions by the hideous galosh, and be *ugly* as well as *dirty*.' (my italics) By the Nineteenth century small feet for women had become not only desirable but were thought to be natural.

Next morning the prince went to his father, the King, and said to him: 'No one shall be my wife but she whose foot this golden slipper fits.' Then were the two sisters glad, for they had pretty feet. The eldest went with the shoe into her room and wanted to try it on, and her mother stood by. But she could not get her big toe into it, and the shoe was too





Syrian bride
wearing bridal shoes
(*Geographie* 1939)

The small foot syndrome was carried to an appalling extreme in China where footbinding began during the Twelfth century. A steady pressure was applied to the feet of young girls until the bones broke and the heel was forced as closely as possible to the ball of the foot. Women suffered excruciating agony during the process which eventually crippled them and bound them securely to the confines of the home. Footbinding began as an upper class habit in North China and filtered through society until working women were forced to crawl about their work in the fields. Feet in China were considered a more erotic image than breasts and an enormous amount of erotic literature was produced about feet and shoes. A

French physician living in Peking during the Nineteenth century wrote, "The bride's shoe is exhibited before the bridegroom's parents and figures as one of the deciding arguments in determining the price of purchase."

In England, during the Seventeenth century, the severely constricting pointed shoe, providing an illusion of delicate feet, came into fashion for women. From then on women were continuously squeezed out of public life and into shoes which were several sizes too small. This squeeze reached a low point in the buttoned boot of the Nineteenth century. When women started to rebel and to throw off their bonds and loosen their laces Mrs. Haweis exclaimed in horror, "It is one of the most potent objections to the cause of female education, that clever women go in for huge boots and gampian umbrellas, setting at naught many graces essentially womanly and indispensable in women, and the fact, which really has some truth in it, positively damages the cause."

In recent years the high heel has become associated with female footwear but its origins were bi-sexual. In 1470-80 both men and women began to wear high heels. Male heels turned scarlet and grew up to six inches tall at the court of Louis XIV. This fashion came to an abrupt end, at least in France, with the revolution, when any mark of the aristocratic was decidedly suicidal and all men were supposedly on an equal footing.

The symbolic function of high heels is complex. Laura Mulvey provides a brilliant, lucid explanation of high heel fetishism in her article on the painter Allen Jones (*Spare Rib* issue No. 8). She points out that Jones' pictures are projections of male castration fears; "A whip can be simultaneously a



Bound feet of a Chinese woman (*Musee de l'Homme, Paris*)

substitute phallus and an instrument of punishment. Similarly, the high heel, a classical fetishistic image, is both 'a means of discomfort and constriction.' In the language of fetishism and castration fears, "women without a phallus have to undergo punishment by fetish objects ranging from tight shoes and corsetry, through rubber goods to leather and torture."

Bernard Rudofsky tells us the "basis on which foot or shoe fetishism tends to arise, is a fascination with the idea of restraint whether endured, inflicted or merely witnessed or imagined . . . because the restraint of the feet produces a more marked effect than the restraint of the hands." Perhaps this reasoning is partly responsible for the mystique of the seductive walk. Moreover, Rudofsky feels that, "the compulsion to obstruct a woman's walk is far more widespread than one might think."

In Biblical times a Hebrew woman's movements were checked by 'stepping chains'. Her ankles were joined by a short chain effectively hobbling her. As with the dwarfed feet of the Chinese women, their tripping steps became an eroticised image.

Shoe symbolism is never cut and dried; it remains ephemeral and contradictory.

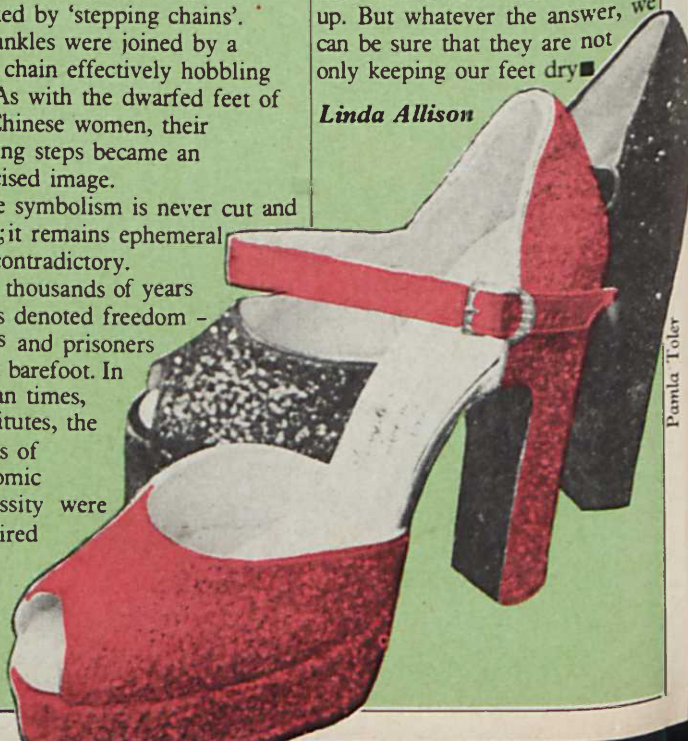
For thousands of years shoes denoted freedom - slaves and prisoners went barefoot. In roman times, prostitutes, the slaves of economic necessity were required

by law to wear open sandals while shoes were reserved for 'chaste' women. For hundreds of years the sight of a woman's bare feet was considered sexually provocative. Even today remnants of this taboo survive - do you remember Ava Gardner in *The Barefoot Contessa*? or even Jane Fonda in *Barefoot in the Park*?

However, where shoes once meant freedom today they imply constraint. We 'kick off our shoes' to indicate freedom and relaxation. For hippies bare feet were a natural part of their philosophy. And now, for all of us, bare feet mean love and peace while Jackboots and bover boots symbolize aggression and regimentation.

But what about wedgies? Are we conspiring in our own downfall? Or is the lack of choice offered to us another manifestation of the male conspiracy? Or, are we tired of being Little Women tripping along on dainty feet? Perhaps platforms are just another indication that women are on the up. But whatever the answer, can be sure that they are not only keeping our feet dry ■

Linda Allison



Much to the disgust of my mother and some of my friends, my husband and I have decided against having children. We have no other children and are fairly young. None of the contraceptive pills given to me agree with me and although I am to be fitted next month with a special IUD this will not give me much peace of mind. My husband has agreed to have a vasectomy rather than have me go through the somewhat longer operation. Will our family doctor refer us for the operation as we would like it done under the National Health. Has he any right to object and if so, what can we do about it?

There is no legal objection to your decision. Some doctors may take a moral stand against your idea which could be unpleasant and embarrassing and I have no idea of what the climate of opinion regarding this topic is in your town. I have spoken with a doctor who counsels on vasectomy for the Family Planning Association at their headquarters, Margaret Pike House in Mortimer Street, London W.1. and he says that the usual procedure is to see the couple and discuss the matter with them. Obviously some care has to be taken when a couple is young because all relationships do go through changes and they may have a chance to regret their actions later. Under some circumstances, the operation would be agreed upon and even performed free. Under others, you might be requested to make use of your IUD for a while - say a year - and then come back again. If your decision was unaltered, the vasectomy would be arranged. Alternatively, if the IUD failed in that time - which is unlikely - you would be assured of an early abortion and sterilisation. Your local FPA should be able to direct you to the nearest vasectomy facility which will automatically involve a half-hour's counselling. Try and be co-operative with that. You may indeed know your own mind but the acting physician wishes to ascertain that before the operation is performed.

I have never written to any sort of problem page before but have always struggled to sort out my own difficulties, sometimes succeeding, sometimes not, but I really would value your advice on this matter.

I've been qualified and working in London for a year now, having been at college for three years before that. I come from a loving family, was very happy at school in a jolly sort of way, moved into a hostel with a friend when I first came to London and have since lived in a few flats with people I know, and in most cases with good friends. I have quite a large circle of acquaintances of whom I am fond and a few real friends of both sexes who I value a good deal. I am now 23 and have had a genuinely rewarding social life for the last ten years. I recently finished a fairly abortive affair with a man for whom I care greatly, but with whom I could not be happy basically because he never knew me as an individual. I say all this because I have fairly suddenly decided that I want to move out of this chatty house in which I live and find a self-contained room of my own.

I wonder whether you think this is a good way of tackling my realisation that much of my life has been superficial. I do care about

bigger things but am constantly distracted by the lightweight side of my nature. Do you think someone like me would benefit from living alone? I feel the decision is overdue; I constantly feel a sense of separateness from all around me and am tormented by self-doubt and my lack of ability to know myself. I feel it is true that one must know and love oneself before moving outwards in a true way. I don't know how to go about getting a room except through the evening paper but even writing this letter is wasting your time because I feel more and more strongly that I must do this. So many people wake up to what matters very late having wasted much time in something which leaves them emptily sad. I wonder, if you publish this letter, if it might help anyone else who wanted to break away from the insidious security of living with pleasant but not stimulating people, a group of friends and ready-made chat.

It was a great pleasure to get your letter because it is so open and directly about what you feel. It is also a great pleasure to be asked to include it on this page. It seems to me that you are asking for an endorsement of feelings which are not easily comprehensible in the circles in which you mix, from family on down. If you feel the need to make this voyage of discovery, you will. The whole tone of your letter says that you will. Great. Practically speaking, it may be difficult to get the kind of room you want. Usually when one decides to do these things, it is with a picture of one's habitat in mind, no matter how hazy. However, in London at the moment, you'll probably have to compromise that vision rather heavily. But that won't stop you if this is what you want to do. You'll find that both Time Out and the New Statesman have rooms and flats mentioned in their classified columns and a search there might be more fruitful than the straight London evening papers. Alternatively what about a notice in the local papershop window or on the pinboard at your old college?

I think it's interesting that this decision of yours, which I am sure has been brewing for some time, should come to fruition after an unhappy affair. It seems to have heightened your awareness that you are not clearly defined as an individual and maybe even the very chatty pleasantness of which you are a part makes it difficult to get through to you. On the other hand don't lose sight of the fact that you're going to go into yourself in order to come out. A massive dollop of introspection is only constructive if you can then harness what you've learnt to help you in your interactions with others. I'm sorry to sound tweedy and pious but with the exceptions of the few outstanding creative artists who have needed total solitude as a way of life and a discipline in which to produce whatever it was, loneliness or solitude of this kind can become a trap. Perhaps in your case it will be most constructively used as a journey of intellectual and emotional discovery. It may also be used as a certain kind of anonymity so that you may enter situations you have not previously experienced and taste them without committing yourself.

Men I meet continually give the impression that I am the "odd-(wo)man-out" in not responding coolly and naturally to their sexual advances, that I "complicate" matters more than necessary. Is this just a device they employ to make a girl acquiesce through feelings of discomfort, guilt or fear? Do most women enjoy casual and impersonal relations with men or is it just another example of women trying to fit into men's fantasies? Am I, indeed, the odd-(wo)man-out by demanding more of even casual relationships?

To answer your first question first, yes, of course it is a device to win a mattress conquest by exploiting female insecurities. It is however pretty immature behaviour and can only work if you're as shakey as the pursuer hopes you are. Such a line can gnaw at your self confidence even if you are very secure, which is, I surmise, your situation. I don't know whether most women enjoy casual and impersonal relations - I acknowledge the necessity of making generalisations in order to expound but hate making them in this area of behaviour because sex is such an individual activity. There are undoubtedly women who prefer a series of casual relationships rather than the commitment of a deep involvement but, apart from an occasional kick, I can't see anybody of either sex seeking casual and impersonal relationships for satisfaction unless he or she is really into playing chess with human pieces. It would seem that as women become liberated and I'm speaking now of the individual effort of self-realisation, not the Movement, one of the things that some of them try to do is out-man men but it's usually a phase which dies the death when they realise the strength of their own position and the pointlessness of channelling energy into trying to be what they are not.

I think the most pertinent juxtaposition of words is "coolly and naturally" - because I cannot think of anything more confusing to an emotional person than the whole ethos of being cool. It's a drag and a strain and usually an elaborate defence. Keeping your cool is one thing. The permanent elaboration of polar tactics in passionate situations is reminiscent to me of gauche teenagers in svelte black cocktail dresses - in other words, the assumption of a mask to cover considerable inadequacy. That said, I wonder what you do or say when sexual approaches are offered to you? There's a famous scene in Batchelor Party between Don Murray and Carolyn Jones in which she says that he must say he loves her before they go to bed. I can remember spending hours trying to persuade men to commit their lives to me before we knew whether we were any use to each other or not.

Often what lingers in the back of the woman's mind, whether she knows it or not, is the feeling that she must be able to rationalise her sexual relationships. She must be able to say, "He said he loved me" or "Well I was a bit tight" or "He seemed so sad" - in case the world tries to check up on her. You only really begin to grow up when you cease to anticipate that kind of explaining and do what you want to do - say yes if you mean yes and no if you mean no and be at peace.

Anna Raeburn

NEWS

The changing role of women in Ireland

Before we went to Northern Ireland we were cautioned by more than one person not to talk about Women's Liberation. "It's irrelevant; there's a war going on. Women may have time for that later." We were there only a few days and spent most of the time with Catholic working class housewives. Every woman we met asked us about the women's movement.

Our first encounter with British occupation was this side of the Irish Sea. At Heysham as we boarded the ship our car was searched and our names and dates of birth made their way, we assume, back to the army computer.

We arrived in Belfast at dawn. At that time of day the town looked particularly depressing. It was clear that well before "the troubles" started it was a city devastated by poverty. Now houses and shops are boarded up or bombed flat. Barbed wire and corrugated iron were everywhere. Ramps every so often in the road presumably to slow traffic and so stop quick getaways; barricades of oil drums or concrete to stop cars being left (with bombs). How much of this is for "protection" and how much just to make life more difficult is hard for "outsiders" to say.

More mobile objects to make life difficult were armed patrols; "pigs" - saracens, jeeps and other army vehicles - and soldiers pointing rifles at you. We were frequently stopped (day or night) at road blocks. The car was searched and identity taken once again. Side streets in the centre of the city were blocked



to traffic. It is here where there are shops and offices, and not on housing estates, that protection is concentrated.

The Catholic housing estates themselves were ghettos, more literally than we had expected. Each was a self-contained community where it was impossible to live for any length of time without knowing everybody. Lifeless statistics on high unemployment and low wages could be grasped visually. It was as if somebody had crammed as many people as possible into the smallest

possible area. Plans like this can only be directed at those who can't afford to get away from them.

But there's another side to the ghettos. They are a natural organisation. The fact that the women and children all know each other and are always there makes them the backbone of any resistance. The armed struggle protects the community, but the community protects the armed struggle. We were told that even a woman who is not sympathetic to armed resistance is prepared to open

her door to protect a member of the I.R.A. - "Any woman on this estate will".

The women are withholding rent and rates en masse, and refusing to pay for electricity, water or gas. There's very little the State has been able to do; when they cut off supplies people know how to turn them on again. And people in Northern Ireland have lost the fear of "breaking the law". We heard about the special Act to deduct bills outstanding from Social Security, Unemployment and Sickness Insurance, and Family Allowances. This could be very effective if the State were prepared to enforce it; they have to decide if it's worth even further antagonizing the Catholic community.

Already every second of the day is shaped by the presence of the foreign army. Armed foot soldiers patrol the estates and carry out periodic searches of the houses, usually before dawn. The children are frequently stopped. A seven-year old: "They give us sweets and ask if our Mums and Dads are in the I.R.A.". The women - mothers, sisters, daughters and girl friends - who have family imprisoned or interned spend a lot of their week preparing food parcels and making long journeys for visits, spending two or three hours in the waiting rooms at Long Kesh and Crumlin Road or Armagh jails. One woman we met made two visits a week to her two sons interned in Long Kesh, and one visit to a third son in Crumlin Road. Of £25 a week that she, her husband and four other children had to live on, £15 went ▶

on parcels; fags, food and clothes for the ~~three~~ inside.

But women's activity, despite this burden, is extending. Until recently only men were "lifted"; now there are over sixty women political prisoners in Armagh jail. But it's still safer for women to be publicly involved in politics. Protest marches are made up predominantly of women, girls and boys. This shift to open dependence on women has meant above all that women no longer have time for their traditional work in the home, and they are increasingly proud of it. "I haven't baked since the troubles started". "Neither have I". And they all laughed. A number of women made clear that they are not going back to the kitchen when "the troubles" are over.

This of course implies that women will refuse to have families of 10 or 12 children. Young women discuss this. These, remember are Catholic women, many of them religious, many of them regular churchgoers. But they demonstrate growing opposition to the Catholic Church as women and as Irish Catholics.

Like Catholic women elsewhere, many use birth control. The Church's position on this, together with its refusal to support the struggle and sometimes its unconcealed opposition to it, is beginning to provoke open attacks on the Church. We were surprised to find no hostility to Protestant people; on the contrary, Catholic and Protestant women were linked as women living through "the troubles". Women practising birth control and opposing the Church's domination in other ways are some of the most hopeful moves towards removing barriers to working class unity in Northern Ireland.

The women in Belfast are largely in the home (though as we've tried to show this has an entirely different meaning there). But young girls who don't emigrate take jobs in shops and factories at wage rates as low as those in London five or even 10 years ago (this is also true of the men). Because of discrimination and intimidation even fewer women are going out to work. We asked if women were

organising in factories as they were in the community, and a woman told us: "We tell them not to work. We tell everybody to come out of the factories and go on the S.S. so they can take a full part in the struggle."

It was not surprising then that the women jumped on wages for housework as a very practical perspective. "What's that button - wages for housework? I support that. But I hardly do any."

So what are our tentative conclusions? First we must make widely known what is happening to women in Northern Ireland and what they are making happen. But to do that we have to place their struggle as women in an entirely new context. It's not "irrelevant" to the war, as we were told before we went, and it's not just "relevant" to the war either. It's crucial. On the one hand, women are bolder in their actions, and are depended on to be more openly involved. On the other, the conflict between their feminist needs and the power of the Church is breaking new ground in the history of Irish working class struggle. Women are increasingly aware of the power their crucial role gives them.

At the same time young people and children (who went on school strike while we were there) have carved out their own importance. How important can be judged by the fact that 12 school children under 16, are now interned. Men and women, adults and children, old and young, see each other more and more as political comrades. In this way the family is transformed into a political unit where the traditional power relations are undermined.

The struggle in Northern Ireland is an offensive based in the community, not in the factory. In the past unemployment - lack of wages - has been its weakness. It was always assumed if you're not in the factories you can't have power. But the people of Northern Ireland have shown the power the community can have through armed struggle. Women too can find a power based in the community, where we are wageless but never unemployed (we're always working in the home and not getting money for it). Women in Northern Ireland have found that base. They are at a higher stage of struggle than we are, and this has resulted in their rejecting the work in the home. But they don't consider the factory as the alternative. No one we met, man or woman, thought she was making a

struggle for jobs outside the home. They have taken arms, and are challenging State power. They have gone on rent strikes or left their jobs and are claiming the wealth that has been stolen many times over. They are not "unemployed"; they are busy and active on their own behalf.

It's not so surprising then that, despite the suffering, the grief for the dead and the constant tension, we found in people, and most especially women, real solidarity. It's clear to them that whatever happens now, there's been a break with the past, they are developing and changing, and nothing will ever be the same.

Some women from the power of Women Collective

In mid November, Margaret Byrne became another housing casualty: a victim of local borough policy of not providing accommodation for singles. Miss Byrne, an old age pensioner, left her Hammersmith flat after repeated requests and what she termed "harassment by the landlord". As a temporary measure, she moved in with a friend who lives in a flat in the Richmond area. When she applied for council housing, she was turned down, no doubt regretfully, on the grounds that she had moved out of the Hammersmith catchment area (for three weeks!) and that she had not been evicted, in the strictly legal sense of the word. By that stage it wasn't even relevant that no-one had bothered to inform Miss Byrne that borough housing policy only attends to those who have been literally put out in the street. Or that, at 70, she was hardly going to wait for the midnight knock of the evictor.

The housing people at Hammersmith were "terribly sorry for her" but their sympathy evidently couldn't make them bend the rules. Because, however desperate her situation was she wasn't a couple. Social Services, with just about their usual degree of helpfulness, had explained that all they could do was try to place Miss Byrne in an old peoples' home. They failed but it hardly mattered. Miss Byrne is sprightly and understandably reluctant to move to an OP home.

It all left her going out every day to find housing. Eventually an acquaintance (a nun in the Catholic church) located a temporary flat which is suitable. It all makes you wonder just how narrowly council housing authorities define their job.

Elisabeth Wynhausen



Photo: Sheila Gray

NEWS

MATERNITY LEAVE

A young blonde starlet splashes into a swimming pool as the cameras whirr in the latest Truffaut film about a film. Suddenly the PA catches the director's arm, the starlet is supposed to be playing the role of secretary and, horror of horrors, she's obviously pregnant. In the happy families world of the film, the actress is allowed to keep her job, they just cut out the budding bulge so she can still play the sexy secretary.

So Truffaut brings in the unmarried mother, the object of his humanity and kindness. Most of us have to cope on a rather different level with pregnancy and work. We are not protected by legislation from being fired the minute the secret's out and, unmarried or not, about one third of women with dependent children in this country are working.

In Spare Rib No. 15 we published the TUC's Best Practice Maternity Leave Recommendations, on which unions have negotiated successfully with some industries in the public sector, but rarely in the case of private companies. At that time we didn't know that Mothers in Action had planned a 'Target' Maternity Leave Campaign. Since it's not much use arguing for creche facilities at work if you have not been allowed to keep your job during your pregnancy, we fully support the Mothers in Action demands which are:

1. No woman should be dismissed from her employment because of her pregnancy or during maternity leave and her position should be held open during her absence on maternity leave. We know that many women will still wish to give up work when they have a baby, but they should be able to make a genuine choice between staying at home and going out to work. At present, even if a woman intends to continue working after her child is born she is, more often than not, expected to leave her job before the birth and reapply after the birth. This is absolute nonsense. Every woman should have the option of having a job held open for her during maternity leave.
2. Every woman should be entitled to a minimum of 12 weeks maternity leave with net wage to cover the ante and post natal periods. We have been criticised for asking for this as we are told

that the burden would be borne by the employer. In fact what would happen would be the woman would claim her maternity allowances and earnings-related benefits and the employer would make this up to the normal net wage as if she were on sick leave. This system is used in Germany and Austria and raises no problems there.

3. **Maternity leave to be considered as a period of unemployment for purposes of assessing pension, sick pay and unemployment benefits:** It is essential that the period of maternity leave should be counted as continuous employment so that the woman concerned is not penalised in any way.

4. **Pregnant women should be entitled to time off, with pay, to attend a hospital or clinic:** It is vitally important that pregnant women should be seen by a doctor before the 16th week of pregnancy and that they should attend a maternity clinic regularly thereafter. At present some women, particularly those who are single, are reluctant to ask for time off for this purpose and, indeed, many may lose money by doing so. It should be recognised by the employer that attendance at the clinic is essential for the health of mother and expected baby alike and therefore time off for such visits should be allowed without question.

5. **Sick leave should be granted during pregnancy on production of a medical certificate:** It sometimes happens that a doctor will order a woman to take some time off or to work shorter hours during part of her pregnancy. This should be allowed on production of a medical certificate.

6. **Nursing mothers in employment should be entitled to sufficient time off for this purpose:** In some countries, e.g. Germany and Italy, it is the practice to allow nursing mothers to work shorter hours than usual in order that they may continue to feed their babies.

Mr MacMillan, the Secretary of State for Employment, told Mothers in Action 'The Government's view is that our present combination of legal obligation, advanced social security and health provisions and accepted practice and agreements in industry provides more flexible and suitable means of protecting women employees generally than would be achieved by any other method.' This issue will be published too late for you to sign the petition going to Mr MacMillan on December 5 urging him to reconsider this statement, but if you want to contact Mothers In Action, their address is 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG■

A look at legislation already passed by other European countries makes it obvious that pregnant working women could have a much better deal and it should be initiated now.

	Maternity leave	Pay	Dismissal during Pregnancy	Time for Nursing
Belgium	14 weeks	60% wage	No, nor 4 months after.	
France	14 weeks + 1 year	Full pay Unpaid	No, nor 1 month after, nor during extra year.	
Germany	14 weeks 18 weeks premature or twins + 1 year	Net wage Unpaid	No, nor 4 months after.	Total 1 hr/day
Italy	12 weeks + 6 months	80% wage 30% wage	No, nor 1 year after.	2 periods/day for 1 year. If creche on premises, total 1 hr/day; if not, total 2 hr/day.
Luxembourg	12 weeks	50-75% wage	No nor 3 months after.	
Netherlands	12 weeks	Full pay.	A Bill is before Dutch Parliament.	



-Well, as long as you don't try to get away, you can hardly feel it.

SELLOUT

BIRMINGHAM MEN'S CONFERENCE



BOOST THEIR MORALE

You are obliged to look beautiful
well-groomed and pleasant.
For you are the source of courage for our menfolk.
For you are responsible, now more than ever,
for a cheerful atmosphere at home.
It might require an effort, but keep smiling
and try to look extra lovely.
It will work, it will raise their morale.

Helena Rubinstein. Beauty that works.

This appeared in the Nov 8 issue of the Israeli English language newspaper, the 'Jerusalem Post'. Carol Glucker, who sent it to us writes, 'I find it particularly offensive in a country where almost all unmarried women over the age of 18 serve in the armed forces and at a time when all women are carrying out their professional and family duties under extremely difficult conditions, many of them suffering acute anxiety and grief.'

*... Perhaps
underground's hope for survival
are now 73 "alternative com-
munity papers", ranging from London
publications like Brixton's Own Boss
and Islington Gutter Press, down to
voices of North Devon and Throbbing
Dung from Halifax. There are papers
for minority groups - Spare Rib for
women, Gay News for homosexuals,
Grass Roots and Blackbored for the
black community. And there is the
startling success of Time Out, sell-*

*This appeared in the Daily
Telegraph colour supplement,
Sept. 28, sent in by
Hilary J Brown.*



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COSMOPOLITAN GIRL DANNY EVON

*From Stationery Trade
Review- sent in by Bob Dyson*

The Men's Conference in Birmingham was a tentative affair. Each of the 100 or so men who attended it felt that there was something that justified being there, even something that justified going away to set up a local men's group. But few people felt willing to articulate much in the way of a 'men's politics' at this stage. The majority seemed content to allow the Conference to be a learning process. What follows is not so much a report of the Conference as an account of some of the things I felt I learned from it. This account is strictly my own personal one - its not representative in any way.

The conference took what seemed at first to be an enormous gamble by not having any agenda or planned structure at all. When we arrived and were told this, hardened conference-goers like myself reeled a little, and spent half-an-hour or so wandering around feeling distinctly apprehensive. Then a number of small groups began to coalesce around the conference hall, sitting on the floor in circles. With a certain amount of intermingling, these groups stayed put for the whole of the Saturday.

I think most people felt that the lack of formal structure on this occasion had the valuable effect of preventing people from adopting defensive/aggressive public roles. It encouraged honesty about why we had personally come to the conference, and what we hoped to get out of it. It made for a more open interchange of feelings and ideas.

Probably a majority of the men at the Conference have been involved in personal relationships with women in the Women's Liberation Movement. One of the impetuses towards forming men's groups came from the fact that while many men had come to support the ideas of the Women's Movement and were committed to ending, as far as possible, their own oppression of women, they experienced problems when it came to putting this into practice. It was logical to meet up with other

men in the same situation, to pool experiences, to try to gain insight into the way men act and think as sexists. Men's responses to the Women's Movement and the changes it had brought about in their personal lives was one of the issues the group discussions dealt with.

I don't think anyone at the conference had the idea that men could themselves take on the job of the women's movement. Only that there is useful work men's groups can do, amongst themselves and with other men, in reaching towards an understanding of women's analysis of sexism and learning how we can make at least some of the changes this analysis demands of us.

At this level a men's "movement" is content to remain in a subordinate position to the women's movement, learning from women's practical and theoretical insights, and attempting as far as possible to internalise them: in other words, to stop being pigs. At another level, however, men's groups have a specific function of their own. If sexism is the complex of ways in which men dominate and oppress women, it is also a system of values and institutions which distorts the human potential of both sexes. It is a kind of code through which men and women communicate with each other, and through which they define themselves as men and women. As sexism is increasingly challenged, and as women's position in society alters in favour of greater

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OVERSEAS

Who's Head of the Household, Then?

In California, a husband will lose his legal authority as head of the household, and women will receive equal credit opportunities with men, under legislation signed by Governor Ronald Reagan.

The Equal Property Rights Law, effective in January, '74, gives a wife joint power to acquire or dispose of community property.

Spouses will have to obtain each other's permission before they sell household effects or clothing.

The other new law will make it illegal to prevent women from receiving credit solely because of their sex or marital status.

Attention Adulterers and Unmarried Citizens

The Revolution Command Council of Libya has announced that all punishments are being adjusted to conform with Islamic law known as the Sharia.

Adulterers and unmarried citizens engaging in sexual intercourse will receive 100 lashes in public whipping ceremonies.

Jewish Women Unite

An international organisation designed to promote a change in the status of women within American and Israeli Judaism is expected to be founded shortly.

Dr. Dorit Padan-Eisenstark, Chairman of Behavioural Sciences at the University of the Negev in Israel, and a leading sociologist, says the purpose of the organisation will be to 'find ways to change Judaic attitudes towards women.'

Dr. Padan-Eisenstark and Paula Hyman, or Ezrat Nashim, the American Jewish feminist organisation, and several other prominent feminists, including Betty Friedan, recently announced their plans to form the International American Jewish Feminist Organisation at a press conference in New York.

Currently on a lecture tour of the United States, Dr. Padan-Eisenstark says that orthodox Judaism - the official law of Israel - discriminates against women.

Certain rituals should be changed, she says, so that women are included in religious observances and are allowed to study the Talmud.

Women Not Invited

A woman member of the National Farmers' Union recently applied on the standard form to attend her local branch's annual dinner.

A day or two later she was contacted by an apologetic secretary who explained that women were not invited.

After the event had taken place, she found out that the principal guest had been - a woman MP.

It's about time the National Farmers' Union sorted itself out.

Abortive arguments

POLITICIANS continue to argue about proposed changes in West Germany's abortion laws; others are trying to figure how much the new schemes will cost in terms of medical insurance. They've come up with a figure of about £37,000 for every 1000 terminations toward which the Bonn government would contribute nearly £10 million a year, and the federal and local authorities another £2,000. However, women in the Social Democratic party who have been active in pressing for the reform point out that there is no way of knowing how much would be saved on medical treatment for illegal back-street abortions.

The women activists have been pressing for abortion on demand within the first three months of pregnancy and have also lobbied for welfare measures to complete the reform. If passed, the new supportive measures would provide for more family planning centres in West Germany (there are only 50 at the moment), would pay for home-helps if a mother has to go to a hospital or nursing home, and would protect working mothers through insurance benefits, payable for children under eight who have to stay home because of illness.

The Socialist-Free Government coalition has also proposed medical advice on contraception by right, and medical insurance schemes for women having abortions.

One man's meat . . .

THE WAY TO A MAN'S HEART they say is through his stomach, but for one M. Noel Carriou, his love of good food has led him to jail on two occasions. Seventeen years ago Mr. Carriou enraged because his first wife had served him undercooked meat, threw her out of bed

participation and equality, we find ourselves requiring new ways of relating, new ways of defining ourselves. In the women's movement this process appears to be well under way (see, for example, "Our Bodies, Our Selves", Boston Women's Health Collective). For men, it is only just starting.

Maintaining myths about women has required maintaining myths about men. The sexual stereotype of women is a lie. So is the sexual stereotype of men. We go through our lives attempting to live out this lie, attempting to live up to the various images of masculinity we have absorbed from our culture. Probably very few of us have been all that comfortable about it, but until recently there have been few opportunities to see beyond it.

If the women's movement has already taught us a lot about the mystifications that have motivated our behaviour, men's groups give us a further opportunity to find out some truths about our feelings and our bodies; to learn about ourselves and each other, and the way we also have been conditioned.

I'm personally doubtful if the word "Liberation" can be applied to a men's movement without being devalued. But the beginnings of a greater understanding of how we perceive ourselves, and why, certainly feels liberating. It felt good on Saturday, anyway, and resulted in a rapid sense of solidarity and warmth among the men at the conference. It's unusual for men to let their defences down and discuss their uncertainties about themselves in private, let alone in public. We are more used to presenting variations of the theme of virility, toughness, stoicism, and generally being in control of things.

The nuclear family has a crucial role to play in capitalism as a private unit of consumption. Within this system, men are obliged to act as breadwinners, generally competing against each other for jobs and money on behalf of themselves and their families. The competitive masculine ethos (in which personal worth is measured in terms of success, achievement, the ability to dominate others) and the competitive nature of the capitalist system, lock in with each other, reinforcing each other at work and every other sphere of social interaction.

Actually, a lot of men don't particularly like having to be breadwinners (particularly if it involves doing shitty jobs), any more than they like going off to

kill or be killed in wars. Many men would be happier if they could choose jobs without the criteria of status and masculine achievement. Many men would also like to see a better balance between their lives at work and their lives at home.

The role of the nuclear family in determining these and other aspects of men's lives was another issue discussed at the conference, as was male competitiveness in work and personal relations. There is a need to disentangle the positive aspects of so-called masculinity (the aspects, in fact, which women are now re-discovering in themselves) from the negative ones. In the same way, there is a need for men to liberate the "woman in their heads" - to rediscover the "feminine" qualities which they have projected out of themselves onto an externalised feminine ideal.

The discussions at the conference on these and other questions generally avoided theory, and were limited to people's own experience of these problems and how they had tried to solve them. It was nice, by the way, that the discussions about competitiveness were so uncompetitive.

On the Sunday everybody met together, and we heard what the different groups had talked about the day before. When we turned to future action and various organisational questions, it became apparent that since there was as yet no men's movement, most of this kind of discussion was premature. For the same reason, there was little overtly political discussion over the weekend (and a consequent lack of division along sectarian lines) though some local groups are concentrating their attention on political theory.

We agreed to hold another conference in Leeds some time next April, by when there are likely to be a lot more local men's groups, a lot more experience and ideas, and, hopefully, a lot more of the kind of friendly mutual learning I personally felt was going on at Birmingham.

John Hoyland

(Note: If men readers of Spare Rib would like to find out more about the literature and the men's groups that already exist, lists can be obtained from: Birmingham Men's Liberation, c/o Rob Coyle, 55 Grove Avenue, Moseley, Birmingham 13. Better still - why not start a group of your own?)

so violently that she broke her neck. After seven years inside for that one, Carriou was let out and married again. Wife number two made the mistake of overcooking a roast, whereupon the homicidal gourmet struck again, and is now beginning an eight year term. The judge recommended leniency, and told M. Carriou in passing sentence that he understood that good cooking was an important part of married life.

Fined for smuggling The Pill

UNDECLARED birth control pills cost two French women nearly £100 when they tried to bring them to France from Holland, and were stopped at the border by the upright douane. The two were amongst two busloads of women returning from Holland after abortions; 64 were held at the border post before being allowed to re-enter la belle but backward France. The Abortion and Contraception Freedom Movement protested the treatment undergone by the returning women, and its president, M Monique Antonie said that the French government should change the abortion laws and take Frenchwomen out of a situation 'close to that of the Middle Ages.'

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■ **Postal Introductions** for friendship or marriage. Details from *Duet*, 11 Macclesfield St., London W1.

■ **Women and Revolution in Vietnam.** This slide show is a personal account prepared by a group of women active in W.L. in this country that links oppression, struggle and liberation of Vietnamese women to our movement. Available with commentary and historical background for rent, and can be accompanied, if expenses are met, by one of the group. £2 plus £3 returnable deposit. Contact ISC Women's Group, c/o Flat 6, 4 Cleve Rd., NW6

■ **Man, 35**, feels himself to be a woman, seeks counterpart masculine female. Box no. 191

■ **Women's Books**, wide range available from 11 Waverley Rd, Bristol 6.

■ **Homosexual women in Scotland** meet through Scottish Minorities Group. Write: SMG Women's Group, 11 Colme St., Edinburgh 3.

Would anyone with a car, who comes to London be prepared to collect back copies of Spare Rib to give away in colleges, universities, or hospitals etc? If so please contact Spare Rib.

■ **Girl, 23, Gay, semi-recluse** who placed an ad in Spare Rib, please contact us

■ **Sisterhood books**, c/o 22 Great Windmill St., London W1. Send SAE for list.

■ **Women's Liberation Workshop.** 38 Earlham St., WC1 is now open from 10-8pm Mon-Sat, or ring Kingsgate Place Women's Centre at 01-624-1952.

■ **Mother with two small children seeks accommodation with similar in Central London.** Telephone Farnham (Surrey) 6323. (025-13-6323)

■ **Women's Liberation Literature** - or any books. Send SAE for free booklet to H Rutovitz, 31 Royal Terrace, Edinburgh.

■ **Gentle Ghost services** include: artists, cooking, decorating, domestic services, dressmaking, gardening, journalism, research, removals, secretarial and teaching; but try us for anything and we may be able to help. 01-603-2871 services; 603-2865 removals; 603-8983 Help advice and information. 27 Norland Rd., London W11

■ **Gentle Ghost Help Advice and Information.** If there is no one you can share your problems with, or if you are suffering from the unrealities of our materialist society, come along to 27 Norland Rd., W11. (2nd floor) where there will be someone you can talk to (in private); or phone 01-603 8983. Mon-Sat 10am-6pm.

■ **FEMALE/female** exclusive introductions; highly confidential service for release, friendship, liberation, etc. SAE - "Lesbos & Ariadne", The Golden Wheel, Liverpool L15 3HT

■ **Sappho Magazine.** Published by homosexual women for all women. Monthly 30p inc. post. BCM/PE-TREL. London WC1V 6XX. Meeting first Monday each month. upstairs Room. 7.30pm Euston Tavern. Judd St./Euston Rd., London NW1.

Major corporations face discrimination charges

CHARGES of job discrimination on the basis of race, sex and national origin have been filed against four of the biggest corporations in the US: GM, Ford, GE and Sears. Several major unions are also included in the action brought by the Equal Opportunity Commission. The case against the four big corporations reportedly involves thousands of individual complaints including as many as 1,800 against GM alone. Spokesmen for the companies involved expressed various degrees of surprise at hearing of the action being taken against them, while according to the New York Times, the charges could lead to fundamental changes in the way the companies hire, promote, and pay their workers.

Feminist Olympics

THE FIRST ANNUAL FEMINIST OLYMPICS were held recently in New York, organised by New York's Lesbian Feminist Liberation. Turn-out was tremendous, and the winners now proudly display their 'Wonder-woman' patches.

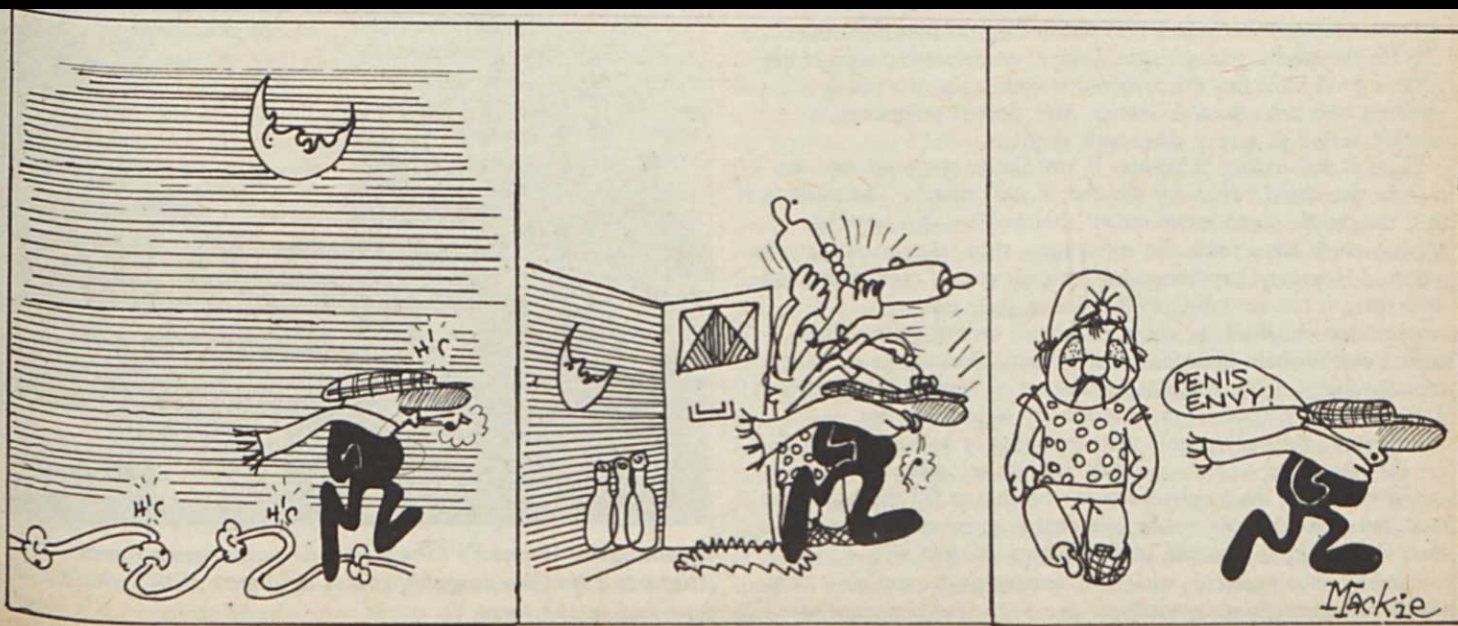
Meanwhile, on other developments on the sports scene, the South Jersey Board of Women Referees (basketball) are threatening to strike unless the New Jersey Board of Scholastic Athletic Association ends current pay discrimination. A male referee gets \$25.00 per game and a woman \$16 . . . even if the two worked together supervising the same game! The women are also trying to find out who made the state-wide decision last year to change from 'boys' to girls' rules. The women were not consulted, but point out that the NJSIAA has closed meetings at which no women members are allowed. Until last year, women were not allowed to ref. boys games, but men could run a girls game. Women recently got the right to ref. boys games, but not a single lady ref. has ever received notice of these games and the ladies were not even officially notified of this decision.

And, ladies are going to bat against the Little League as well. NOW is engaged in a suit against the national young boys' baseball organisation which says it excludes girls as a class because of such factors as 'weaker bones' and a supposed slower reaction time on the part of women. In court, the Little League's expert witness Dr. Creighton J. Hale faced tough cross examination though, and had to admit that there is no way to predict that any individual girl would have weaker bones than a boy, and that since bones weren't tested anyway, many 'weak-boned boys' could be playing Little League baseball. When the data was examined which supposedly showed slower reaction time amongst girls, it simply didn't stand up; one study cited by Hale compared, for example, the reaction times of 5 year old girls to those of seven year old boys. Seems that Dr. Hale doesn't play strictly by the rules!

'Women's Lib. causes secretary shortage'

More than 30,000 secretarial jobs are going begging in the New York area alone, according to Majority Report, a women's publication from Fun City. Employment agencies are blaming the crisis on women's lib, saying that feminists have stigmatised the secretary as a submissive drudge in a dead end job.

We apologise to everyone concerned for the misunderstandings involved in compiling the Dartmouth Park Hill Community Centre article. We would also like to make the following corrections: Dartmouth Park's initial expenditure grant was £1,500 not £15,000, as stated: and the photographs included in the article were taken by Astra Blaug.



CO-OWNERSHIP — WHOSE ADVANTAGE?

There is no security of tenure. If you fail to pay your rent this month, you could be out by the end of next month.' by Stephanie Norris

'For people who do not wish or are not able to buy their own homes, co-ownership provides a means of obtaining newly-built homes under a system which combines all the advantage of renting with some of the benefits of owner-occupation.' (The Housing Corporation: 'Co-ownership Housing. What is it?')

I have a feeling that a lot of single women think that co-ownership may be the answer to their housing needs. Having talked to Mrs. Sheila Steven, who actually lives with her husband and children of 13, 12 and 11 on a co-ownership estate in Surrey, I'm inclined to think it may well not be.

Mrs. Steven undertook to do research into co-ownership for an M.Sc. in Social and Public Administration at the London School of Economics when she realised that there's very little information on co-ownership and that consequently, people don't really know what they're getting into when they become co-owners. What's in store for the single woman who's considering co-ownership?

Providing she can find an estate which has a vacancy, and providing she has sufficient and very regular means, she can move in as soon as its ready — there won't be the problem of getting a mortgage, which very often takes about six months. What she'll have to do is pay a down payment of three or four months' rent in advance — that's a deposit held in case she leaves either with arrears of rent or with dilapidations. If you're talking about your single woman of 20, who will possibly require a bedsit in London, my guess is she will then need to be able to lay out between £10 and £15 a week (the Housing Corporation said this was about right). There are new co-ownership estates with one and two bedroom flats, for which the figure will be something like £8 to £10 a week. What in effect she's doing is paying the full capital cost of that unit of accommodation plus the interest over 40 years and management costs. She's gaining in terms of immediate, short-term benefits, because if she's going to buy a new flat she will probably have to pay rather higher unit cost, and she will also only be able to take out a mortgage for 25 or 30 years, whereas if she takes out a mortgage for 40 years, she spreads the payment over a longer period of time. So her initial outlay will be less, but that's the only way she'll be better off.

'One of the advantages of co-ownership, it is alleged, is that after five years you get a proportion of the capital you have already paid off. Now if you're 20, the chances of you staying for the five-year period are fairly small, because you tend to be mobile. On the other hand, any young person who wants to go into co-ownership wants to look not at existing schemes, but to find new ones, provide themselves with a very secure income and get in on the ground floor, because — if they hang on — over the next ten years co-ownership will become a very cheap form of housing tenure.'

So for the steady young single woman, co-ownership sounds like quite a good idea. But the divorced woman with two young children who becomes a co-owner, Mrs. Steven points out, is putting herself in a very vulnerable position.

'There is no security of tenure. If you fail to pay your rent this month, you could be out by the end of next month. The position is this: the people on an estate are all shareholders in a housing society which has a corporate mortgage — they take out a mortgage with the Housing Corporation on the total cost of their estate and then share it out according to the size of their unit of accommodation. We have about 62 houses on our estate; The capital cost is about £600,000. Our house is fairly large and our capital value is about £10,000, so that we are responsible for about 1/60 of that £600,000. Now if somebody welshes on her contribution, the only people who are going to be forced to pay it are the rest of us. There's a certain amount set aside for what are called voids — if she leaves, we won't be able to fill the house the next day. But what can *not* be tolerated is somebody not paying their share. And a divorced lady with two children will, almost inevitably, have problems with maintenance payments. It's a very tough situation. However much in terms of social conscience we

ought to support her, you are asking 61 other people to do so by increasing their mortgage payments.'

Mrs. Steven has not yet established whether the Supplementary Benefits Commission is prepared to pay the monthly payments of a co-owner who finds herself in straits. As she points out, if you're paying rent and you fall on hard times, you're entitled to supplementary benefit, which consists of a basic allowance and your rent. And if you've got a mortgage, the Supplementary Benefits Commission will give you enough to keep up with your interest payments. But would it, she wonders, pay the whole of a co-owner's rent, which is, in fact, composed of capital, interest and service charges? If they paid only the interest and service charges, there would still be a shortfall on the mortgage.

There's the added complication that every time a co-owned property changes hands, the rent goes up. If it didn't, the Housing Corporation argues, the property would deteriorate in the sense that when at the end of its 40-year lifetime there won't be enough money to make any improvements.

Again, it's the single woman, with or without children, who's likely to suffer, as Mrs. Steven explains.

'Any woman who is a co-owner or lives in a co-ownership house, but who is not a joint co-owner with her husband, must in fact take steps to become so. Each estate has a different tenancy agreement; our particular tenancy agreement gives a widow who is not a co-owner six months to become one on the same terms as her husband, but one estate in the north of England does not give a widow the automatic right to take over her husband's tenancy. What she is allowed to do is to become a new tenant, but of course this means the house is re-valued and she starts paying the higher rent. Most widows are in a hell of a state anyway for money; if they've got to pay more than their husband did, it's impossible.

It's clear that co-ownership is not something the single woman with children should rush into; nor 'the single peripatetic lass', as Mrs. Steven put it. But if you're a single woman in your 30's or have aged parents or relatives depending on you, then maybe co-ownership is what you're looking for.

The first step to becoming a co-owner is to go to your nearest branch of the Housing Corporation. They can give you details of what is available in your area ■



Leamington Women's Liberation demonstrating against the Right to Life Campaign's protest against a PPAS clinic opening in the town.

A union for prisoners' wives

One Monday, in September, Maggie Tuttle wrote out a ~~charter~~. The following day she issued a press release on the formation of the Prisoners' Wives Union. And on the Wednesday she travelled to Birmingham for a radio talk show. Now she'll admit it. In that first week, in September, Maggie Tuttle was the sole member of the union she'd founded.

Within days of her initial announcement, several women were working for the union and dozens, most of them prisoners' wives, had telephoned with avid messages of support or queries about joining. The week after, Maggie and several PWU recruits held sit-ins at all London prisons. Amazingly, they managed to co-opt a sympathetic prison officer. Now, two months later, several hundred women have contacted the PWU and branches have been set up in Luton, Southampton, Solihull and near Dartmoor.

The union has already made tentative plans about housing itself - in a London centre which will eventually open from 9 - 5 on weekdays. Maggie confidently outlines plans for the future. There will be a playcentre; experienced advisers on tap and a 24 hour emergency telephone service.

Many of the women I spoke to told the same story. When husbands or friends are sentenced they have no idea where to turn; no idea of the legal aid and social services available to them. PWU hopes to provide the information, the practical advice and the emotional support for women who find themselves in that terrifying situation. "We're papering over the cracks for the Home Office," says Maggie.

There are daily calls now from probation officers and the wives and friends of prisoners planning to start a union in their locality. Maggie Tuttle believes that in the none-too-distant future there will be branches throughout the country. It sounds optimistic, but then, the union's existence was unthought of six months ago. Its success to date is undoubtedly due to the fact that PWU fills an enormous gap, which had only partly been covered by the setting up of



Maggie Tuttle

PROP, the prison rights association, 15 months ago.

Where there had been a feeling of total isolation, there can now be a sharing of experiences and mutual helping. When I sat in on a WU meeting held at Maggie Tuttle's house in Haringey, I found it had something superficially in common with the early meetings of Womens' Liberation I'd attended in Australia. Here were women discovering - sometimes for the first time - that they were not alone, that others had been through the same crises. Doreen, who is in her 40s and has four kids, had travelled from Folkestone to attend the meeting. It was her first contact with other prisoners' wives. "The first time, when my husband went to prison, I thought there just couldn't be anyone in the same situation as me. . . . I went to Social Services and after I had waited the whole day, I was given £11.50. That had to last us five weeks. It took that long before the regular allowance came through."

There are murmurs of assent. Nearly all these women have

been through the initial shock of the sentence; the feeling of isolation compounded by the ostracism of friends and neighbours and finally, the difficulty of just making ends meet.

Prisoners' wives are eligible for the same miserable pittance that unsupported mothers get. One woman who has a child of 11 months, showed me her social services "pension book". She receives £14.20 a week, which includes the £1.90 allowance for a child of under five. If she earns more than £2.05 a week she loses part of the payment.

But the lives of prisoners wives are even more regulated by officialdom and bureaucracy than the lives of others dependent on social services. Visiting their husbands or friends awaits HM's pleasure, a visiting order sent out each time. Letters to and from prison are censored; prison visits rigidly supervised. Visitors may travel literally hundreds of miles every third or fourth week to spend 20 minutes with husband or friend.

Whether a prisoner gets parole, obviously a matter of burning importance to his family, is kept a closely guarded secret until a few days before the parole date.

Leaving aside the pressing need for reform (if not revolution) within the prison system, it's clear that that system (deliberately?) penalises the families and friends of prisoners. They are judged guilty by association and they pay for it. With all this in mind, the PWU has a charter, drawn up originally by Maggie Tuttle and revised by all members when the union had grown.

This in abbreviated form, is it: "Trade union rates of pay for the work done by prisoners; compulsory and more home-leave and special (conjugal) facilities for long term prisoners; better visiting facilities; allocation to prisons nearer home; the right to be told why parole is refused; independent medical advice for prisoners; the right to send and receive uncensored letters; and to be permitted more than one letter in and out a week; the right to send gifts, including material for leisure-time activities to prisoners; and that prisoners receive basic human rights . . ."

It's hardly revolutionary but it does show clearly the disparity between what most of us accept as basic rights and the treatment that prisoners, their families and friends get as a matter of course.

PWU is desperately short of funds and organised an "Old Time Music Hall" held at Islington Town Hall on December 11, with proceeds for the union and old age pensioners. On January 2, there is to be a rally and march of prisoners' wives - it is hoped that this will attract support from Women's Liberation groups. For further information, Maggie Tuttle's home number is 01.883.2001.

Elisabeth Wynhausen

Queenie Leavis edited the Penguin English Library's "Jane Eyre" by Charlotte Bronte. Unblushingly, the prefatory note to the edition states: "Q.D. Leavis is the wife of the distinguished literary critic, Dr FR Leavis . . ."

NEWS

The ones that got away..

A largely invisible group of women are widows on Social Security, as MP Jack Ashley discovered when, on October 22 in the House of Commons, he sought answers from the Ministry of Social Security to the following questions: how many widows had been deprived of S.S. payments in the past 5 years under the cohabitation rule? How many appeals had been taken to S.S. and National Insurance Tribunals by widows? How many widows appearing before such tribunals were represented? And what was the average waiting period between withdrawal of benefit and hearing of the appeal? He was told that the information was "not available." Michael Meacher had no better luck when he asked next day about the number of women who had forfeited N.I. pension rights by marrying. "I regret," said Ministry spokesman Mr Dean, "that the information on which to base an estimate could not be obtained without undue expenditure of time and effort."

And actress Vivien Merchant was so distressed by being consigned to invisibility by a reviewer who saw fit to refer to her as "Mrs Harold Pinter" (Harold Pinter being the name of her husband) that she wrote and objected. The critic quoted from her letter in his piece in the Sunday Times on October 21, in a gesture of what appeared at first to be due repentance. But no. "That's what you get," said the critic, in churlish self-justification, "for trying to squeeze in extra information."

In the world of women's work . . . our elected representatives in Westminster have been remarkably unresponsive to accusations, notably in Labour Weekly and the Guardian, concerning gross exploitation, and even law-breaking, in the employment by MPs of secretaries. These women, often out of misplaced 'political dedication', work up to ten hours a day in conditions of employment that include no sick pay, no paid holidays, no pensions and often no National Insurance stamp! Each MP can claim £1,000 a year to pay for secretarial help, but it seems that even this paltry sum does not always filter through the MP's pocket in its entirety to the secretary.

Au pair girls are getting organised, according to a Times report on October 22 . . . regular meetings are held in London to discuss exploitation and remedies. Some girls are working 70 hours a week for £4, which makes them, of course, exactly £4 a week better off than many housewives, despite a High Court judge's ruling in a recent case where compensation was sought for a killed housewife, that 'home duties' are worth £15 a week.

Recent examples of press sniggers at women doing a job of work have included the Observer, which headed a piece about women in broadcasting "Birds of the Air" (Get it?); and how about

"joinerettes" as a name for Berwick women who are now making window-frames, in the absence of enough male labour, for Allen Brothers. But it's all right. "We don't intend to make joiners of them," works manager Ferguson assured a Scotsman reporter on October 31, "A joiner is a very skilful chap and it takes some time to create one."

Still, if you're unfairly treated at work you can always join a Union, can't you? Which will it be? How about ASLEF, whose General Secretary said to a recent Guardian enquiry on the anti-discrimination bill, "Mind you, I wouldn't mind being second man if there was a woman driver." Or perhaps you'd prefer the Union of Post Office Workers whose General Secretary Norman Stag told the Guardian that, under a Union agreement, postwomen could only be employed on a temporary basis, and then only if no man was available; and then went on to declare that it would be "most unfair to say that the union is prohibiting the employment of women."

There are times when male thinking on women defies even the most hostile comprehension. Mr Evelyn King MP (Con) has been sounding off in the Times about how absurd it is to raise the school leaving age, since it will involve compelling some married women to attend school. And what is wrong with that? Mr King's letter didn't say what was wrong, but he doubted that any benefit would accrue to a school from the "presence of young wives, sometimes pregnant," and he wanted to know whether the responsibility for compelling 16-year-old wives to go to school rested with parents or husband.

However, a Mr A.C. Sim wrote to the Times 4 days later with the answer. The law does not compel married women to attend school. What the Education Act requires is that children of school age should receive "full time education suitable to their ability and aptitude . . . either by regular attendance at school or otherwise." Since "for a young lady who marries at so early a stage in life, the married life will surely constitute a full time education suitable to her ability and aptitude," concludes Mr Sim, the phrase "or otherwise" can only mean that such a young lady should be excused school.

"The coloured girl's hair," according to Jean Rook in the Express on November 9, "is basically a problem." And even straightening it is no solution, as it doesn't last. Not to worry, though the answer is a wig, and if the Express models are anything to go by, once you've got one on, no-one need ever know the shameful secret of your problem hair. At last you can sport long, shiny, glossy European Waves! Isn't fashion wonderful the way it solves problems. (£7 to £9 each, from Selfridges.)

On October 28, while the Sunday Times ran a good long article about women's self-help medicine, the Observer managed to come up with one of the best illustrations of the need for women to have more control over medicine that I have seen for a long time. Arrogantly entitled "Women Diagnosed," this article by GP Douglas Robb purported to deal with the special characteristics of women patients. "Women are more likely to mislead you unintentionally than men," said he, "Women are never good at passing on information to men because, relying themselves, to such a large extent, on intuition, they seem to assume that the male mind works along the same lines, they attribute to it a greater intuitive instinct than it possesses." It has apparently never occurred to the doctor that "passing on information" involves two people, the one who passes and the one who receives; and if the one who is supposed to be receiving is desperately trying to tune in to the radio-waves of intuition that he romantically imagines to be communicating what the passer-of- information really wants to say, he may well miss what she is saying.

Now, if there's anyone left in any doubt as to the colour of the hair of Margo MacDonald, new Scottish National Party MP for Glasgow Govan, I can refer them to every single national daily on Friday November 9, each of which was quick to reassure its readers



that she is blonde (though few descended to the depths of the Dundee Courier, with its "shapely blonde bombshell.") Readers were also reassured that the MacDonald children will be well cared for when their mother is at Westminster: "This is what happens when someone from a normal background gets elected to parliament," she said, when questioned by an anxious Express reporter on this point, "and it's another good reason for having a Scottish assembly." Quite. But it's also another good reason for adequate child-care facilities, since this is what happens when any woman with children gets any job: everybody is far more interested in what she is going to do about the kids than in any other aspect of her life.

Congratulations to the women of the Women's Liberation Workshop in Edinburgh for being called a "Witches' Coven" by Councillor Anthony Lester. Lester was taking exception to the Workshop's plans for setting up a refuge for battered wives on the grounds that "marriage is a very deep personal relationship between two people and if there are minor incidents which occur and induce a wife to run to a particular organisation, then this will affect eh marriage." Battered women at Chiswick and other refuges, please take note: by running away from the minor incident of being beaten to a pulp, you may well have effected your marriage.

Still in Edinburgh, hesitant praise for Lord Wheatley, High Court judge who sternly criticised a young rapist and his counsel for alleging that the girl victim had been "willing." Praise because judges so often acquit or reduce a sentence on the grounds of the girl's "willingness" or "unchastity"; hesitation because of Wheatley's words: "I get very annoyed when a young girl's character is dragged in the mud like this." Just and realistic attitudes on rape are never going to be brought about while it is regarded as defaming a girl's character to suggest that she consented to sexual intercourse. This counsel's plea on behalf of his client was not a slander; it was simply a lie.

Plans to hold a beauty contest in Lamu, Kenya (behind closed doors with fully clothed contestants and women judges, in deference to Moslem Sensibilities) have fallen through because, according to the Daily Telegraph, only one woman "dared" to enter. The reporter seemed very sure that the appropriate word was "dared" rather than "wanted."

Twenty housewives in a council block at Chorley Wood share fifty feet of washing like between them. Some of them brought rotary driers, but weren't allowed to put them up because the Council said they made the place look untidy.

Quote from a WRAF recruiting ad in November Honey: "And if there tends to be a high proportion of pretty girls in an RAF Officers' Mess, it's hardly surprising in a service where the men outnumber the girls 6 to 1." Even by trying to put myself into their minds accepting their frame of reference, I cannot begin to fathom what this is meant to mean. Is it that (a) you have to be pretty to make it into an officers' mess? (but they wouldn't say that in an advert, even if it is true) or (b) are we asked to believe that the presence of all those surplus men makes the plainest girl pretty? Or (c) is it a clever ploy to get men to join the RAF? Men readers of Honey, that is? Does anyone know? Can anyone even have a guess? It would be fascinating to know ■ Zöe Fairbairns

SHORTLIST

Use this space as a notice board. Send your notices to Shortlist, Spare Rib, 9 Newburgh Street, London W1A 4XS.

EVENTS

At the Women's Liberation and Socialism Conference in September, a lot of women felt that specific papers had not been fully discussed. It was decided to have a series of one day workshops at which these papers would be the particular focus of discussion. At the time of going to press, some dates have been fixed but not the place. Either contact Spare Rib after December 1 or send a stamped, addressed envelope to Ann Scott, 114 Highbury New Park, London N.5. and you will receive details.

December 15 Together We Stand: The theoretical basis for autonomy by Michelene Wandor*. This paper begins an analysis of sexism using a marxist methodology.

January 12 The Politics of Sexuality in Capitalism - Red Collective Pamphlet no. 1. 15p to cover cost and postage from Flat 6, 104 Greencroft Gardens, London NW6.

Sexuality and Submission - by Bea Campbell, published in Red Rag no. 5. 10p + 3½ stamp from Sally Alexander, 91 Alderney Street, London SW1.

February 16 This workshop will focus on the Womens Abortion and Contraception Campaign (WACC). Contact WACC at 14 Radnor Terrace, London SW8 for any literature they have published. The discussion will also be around **Fertility: Economics and Ideology***

March Women and the Wage System by Jean Gardiner*

*available from Ann Scott, 114 Highbury New Park London N5

Women in Education are holding a conference in January, and starting a newsletter. Contact Jill Walker, 14 Clare Road, Manchester.

Media Workshop Conference will now take place sometime in March or April. For information send name and address to Helen Taylor, Women's Centre, 11 Waverley Road, Bristol.

Alternatives to the Family plans a national register of non-nuclear families/groups. For and with information, contact Eileen Meredith, 64 Mallinson Road, London SW11.

Brixton Women's Aid Centre needs toys, clothes, furniture and money. Contact Jane, 01 580 9360.

Cardiff Women's Action Group has set up an Information Service, operating 6-8 pm Mon, Wed, Fri. Contact Gill Boden, 41 Conway Road, Canton, Cardiff. Scotland

A women's action group has started in Stirling. Contact Lesley Wheeler, 2 Keir Street, Bridge of Allan, Stirlingshire.

Glasgow Women in Action group have started a newsletter. Contact Anne MacGregor, 163 Great George Street, Glasgow G12 8AQ.

Wimbledon Women's Liberation Workshop

is taking action over the cutting of grants to unsupported mothers. Contact 13 Falcon House, 26 Morden Road, London SW19.

National Women's Liberation Conference

Coventry have been forced to cancel the conference in January because the only hall available holds a maximum of 500. Since they don't think the conference should be restricted, they have passed their funds onto Edinburgh for the next national conference in July. Coventry will return all registration money, but still hope to have a one day workshop on structure and organisation, especially the pamphlet 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness'. Coventry Group would like to hear if women are interested, contact 34 Albany Road, Earlsdon, Coventry. ►



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The Polytechnic of Central London

Centre for Extra Mural Studies

Contemporary Images of Woman

A study programme using lectures and film as the basis for discussion and which will concentrate on the following areas:

Woman's role in the Family. Woman at work. Educational and training opportunities for girls. Woman and sexuality. Woman in modern fiction.

6.30 p.m. - 8.30 p.m. commencing 16th Jan., for twelve weeks, at 115 New Cavendish St.

Fee: £1.00

Further details: please contact N. Swallow, Short Courses Unit, P.C.L., 35 Marylebone Road. 486 5811 ext. 252

BOOKS ETC.

'Many a Tupamara went underground in pursuit of or in search of a Tupamaro boyfriend,' according to Sir Geoffrey Jackson, whose book *People's Prison* (Faber and Faber, 1973) describing his nearly-a-year in the custody of the Uruguayan urban guerrilla groups has just been published. Sir Geoffrey, who so lightly dismisses the possibility that a woman who joined the Tupas might actually have been politically committed, was British Ambassador to Uruguay at the time of his abduction in 1971. He also tells us that the only time he lost his temper in prison was when he became offended by the 'swearing and vulgarity' of a Tupamara lady.

Lilith

Lilith published bi-monthly by the Women's press. Contributions to PO Box 687, Dublin 4. Lilith begins to rebuild our lost heritage. The first issue is concerned with rejecting the image of woman as object, and has features about Dory Previn, Marily Munroe, George Eliot and Fanny Purnell.

Big Red Diary, Pluto Press 75p

The publisher hopes that the Big Red Diary will provide a real alternative to the established monotony of conventional diaries. Instead of June 21, Longest Day, we have 'June 21, 1908 Hyde Park, London, Suffragette rally of half a million hear Christabel Pankhurst. The Women's Social and Political Union sold railway tickets all over the country at half price'. My entry for May 31 that reads Buy 60 watt bulb, PTA at 7.00 sits somewhat uncomfortably on top of Mao's long march from Juichin across the River Tatu past 1792 Paris, Jacobins came to power. But I'm glad to see that my birthday is heralded by 'Women in Labour keep Capital in Power'.

There's also a mass of useful information - housing, SS, Contraception, Cervical Cancer, Civil Liberties, US foreign Investment, Distribution of Health, Wealth, taxation and more. But make no mistake Lenin sits writing on the backcover.

Gay Marxist No.3

Revolutionary journal from the marxists in GLF. 10p plus postage from Lancaster GLF, 19 Wincent Street, Lancaster.

THEATRE

Come in Hilda Muggins

CAST, the political theatre group, have a new play, *Come in Hilda Muggins*, which portrays the emerging militancy of women against the background of a television interview/investigation at colleges, clubs, pubs, etc. They are also starting a theatre workshop and need actors or anyone interested in building up a revolutionary theatre group. Contact them at 11C Cabbell St., London, NW1, telephone: 402-6087.

Moodies

Six women, and one man make up a high camp cabaret called *The Moodies*. Dressed in a phantasmagoria of fur, plastic, lamé, grey school

socks, scarlet lipstick and silver boots, they send up golden oldies with love and surrealistic humour. Quite contrary to the era they portray, the women are in control of the cabaret - all of them dead pan and individualised inside their camp costumes. The solitary man is a soft looking person (but strong on the piano) who is dressed in drag by the women. In contrast, one of the women in the group parodies male aggression as a leather studded, strutting Elvis singing *Hootchie Cootchie Man*.

Simultaneously glorifying and ridiculing glamour, they are a group to be seen to be believed and appreciated.

Under the Bamboo Tree

Christina Brown won the Sunday Times NUS play writing award with her one act play *Under the Bamboo Tree*. She chose a predictable theme - wife and mistress meeting over coffee with husband/lover - but develops it with uncommon sensitivity and wit. All three of her characters seem real and complex as they reveal more and more of themselves in their verbal thrusts and parries. Never does she take the easy way out by exploiting the cheap laughs inherent in the situation. M. Brown is obviously a name to watch in the talent starved world of the legitimate theatre.

Female Transport

The play written by Steve Gooch and presented by members of the Half Moon Company, was premiered in November. It is about six women convicts being transported to Australia at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century.

The six are confined in chains in a

stinking cell in the hold of the prison ship completely at the mercy of a profiteering captain and his brutal sergeant. Slowly in the face of their torment, being insulted and assaulted, locked in a barrel, flogged and finally, for one of them, being driven to suicide, a new awareness and solidarity comes to them. The play ends as they reach Australia and face the future of separate prisons with the thought that they will still be together "but with a little more space between us".

The play was movingly acted and well presented - the Half Moon has rapidly become one of the best political theatres in London. Having the political message spelled out through the women in the leading roles was welcome, but, in other respects, the women were playing the traditional female theatrical parts: butch, baby doll, tart, tough, and the whore with the heart of gold. A minor complaint - although incredibly talented all of the actresses were too young and attractive. Surely showing six beautiful women being sexually exploited is itself a kind of exploitation.

EXHIBITIONS

Feminist Art in Sweden

Monica Sjöo is having an exhibition in Sweden with a Swedish artist Anna Sjö Dahl. The exhibition is being held in a huge hall - Lund Konsthall (Arts hall) in Lund in the South of Sweden. January 26 - February 24 Monica writes; "Anna Sjö Dahl had a feminist show in Stockholm in April called 'Everyday Life'. She is my age, has 4 children and has been through the whole thing of life on a housing-estate

isolated with the children and a drunken husband. She pulled out of it and produced these very aware paintings about the contradictions between the woman's actual life and the phantasy she is given. She put an unmade bed in the gallery, drawers full of dirty clothes etc. - not as a gimmick but to show her actual life and environment while producing the paintings hanging around the walls.

We are calling our joint show 'Women culture and Everyday Life'. A Radical feminist artist (Danish) from Gothenburg will show her paintings at the same time in Lund - a few steps from the arts hall - calling her show 'Love and Sisterhood', and we will be having joint manifestations, meetings etc. We hope that women will come from Stockholm, Copenhagen etc. to take part.

This event is really aimed at starting a whole discussion in Scandinavia. Many artists in these countries are socialist realist painters but 'Feminism' has been a taboo subject up till now."

Women Artists in the Russian Revolution

'Tatlin's Dream' at Fisher Fine Art Ltd, 30 King Street, London SW1 until January 4.

Quilts

Symbolic works of art, made communally by women in America during the latter half of the 19th Century have been lifted off beds onto gallery wall. See the selection of quilts at the Felicity Samuel Gallery, 16 Saville Row, London W1
December 17 - January 25

Christian d'Estene has her only London Exhibition at the Prudhoe until the 12th January.

d'Estene first exhibited in Paris in 1947 and she was one of the first constructional sculptors to work in metal.

Her work is in two main areas. Strong towers of shapes and murals of enamel work, mostly black.

In the last ten years she has established a reputation in France. After years of being ignored by the establishment she has now finally been accepted by the French - even to the extent of being given the Legion d'Honneur.

Her work is virtually unknown in this country.

Christian d'Estene, at the Prudhoe Gallery, 79 Duke Street, London, W.1. until the 12th January, 1974.

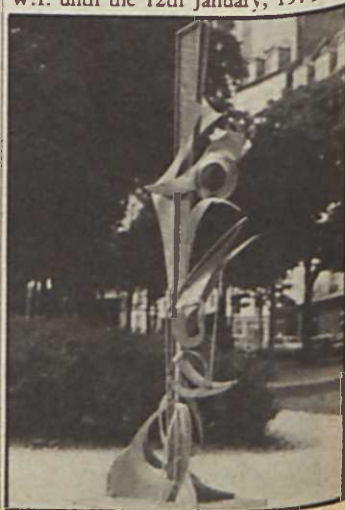


Female Transport at the Half Moon Theatre Club

At first the women constantly bicker and fight amongst themselves as each sees and despises her personal degradation mirrored in the others.



The Second play in the Women's Theatre Festival: The Amiable Courtship of Miz Venus and Wild Bill by Pam Gems directed by Caroline Eves. An explosion of the male and female phantasy stereotypes.



SPARE PARTS

LIGHTING

I have tried to ignore all the cynical laughter and tips on make your own generator, and hope that there is still sufficient power left for us to have lights.

The least we can do is to ensure that they are working and safe. Even if you don't consider yourself an 'electrical' person, make sure that you have THE BASIC REPAIR EQUIPMENT IN THE HOUSE. If you notice any heated lamp-holders or flickering lights, check them immediately in DAYLIGHT. Lights invariably go at night, and tottering on a stool in the pitch dark clutching screw-driver, torch, bits of lamp-holder, screws.. just isn't fun.



TORCH. Make sure it's working.

FUSE WIRE. A card of assorted wires.

FUSES. Spare different amp fuses for the plugs.

CARTRIDGE FUSES. Check the fuses in your mains fuse box. Some light circuits have cartridge fuses instead of wire.

SCREW-DRIVER. Small insulated one.

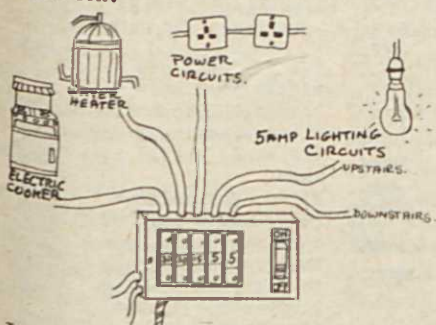
SCISSORS & PLIERS. Technically you should have a proper wire-stripper, but scissors & pliers used carefully are OK.

wiring and fuses

Get to know your fuse box.

Modern ones will all be contained in one box with one mains switch. This must be switched OFF when doing any repairs or investigations.

DIAGRAM OF MODERN WIRING SYSTEM AND MAINS BOX.



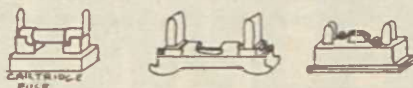
In the modern boxes, the fuses are marked with the ampage that they can take, and the corresponding wire they are fitted with. The lighting will be on separate circuits to the power and you must locate which fuse controls what. In older houses you might have one or two boxes as the installation has been added to over the years. Also the older fuses are not marked in amps. Either replace the burnt wire with one EXACTLY the same size, or:

- Lighting circuit should be 5 amp.
- Power circuit.. 15 to 30 amp.
- Electric cooker.. 30 amp.

FOR DEFINITIONS OF AMPS, WATTS, AND VOLTS, see SPARE RIB October '72.

Every electric circuit is protected by a fuse. If you pass too much current through it, or if your equipment 'shorts', it will break or burn out. (Short circuit - where the live wire touches an earthed part of circuit, or the neutral wire.)

A fuse is a thin metal wire that links the electric circuit. It is contained in a carrier, plastic or fire-proof china, in the mains fuse box. There are many different types. Some modern light circuits have a pull-out cartridge fuse instead of wire. If yours has, keep some spares in the house as fuse wire won't do.



Each fuse belongs to its own socket. Take them out and return them in turn, checking for broken or burnt wire. If you have mended a fuse (with the correct amp wire) and it blows again, you are either over-loading the circuit or a piece of equipment is faulty. In this case, call an electrician.

wiring

EARTH = yellow/green or green...E
LIVE = brown..... or red.....L
NEUTRAL = blue..... or black...N
ALWAYS join wires colour to colour.
NEVER allow wires to touch each other

The live lead (red or brown) must always be connected to the live side (fused) of a plug.

Lights / lamps are of a low ampage and a two core (live and neutral) flex is usually used. The earth wire of the circuit is attached inside the ceiling rose or switch.

3 amp. Two core flex.
Use for lamps, radios.
Up to 700 watts.

6 amp. Two core SHEATHED flex. Use for lights and non-earthed items. Up to 1400 watts.

6 amp. Three core flex.
Use for fridges, single bar fires, with fused plug. Up to 1400 watts.

Whatever stream-lined and immaculate shapes standing lamps now come in, rarely do the designers seem to consider the problems of trailing flex. Many advertising photographs do not even show the lamps fitted with flex. Radio-controlled lamps?

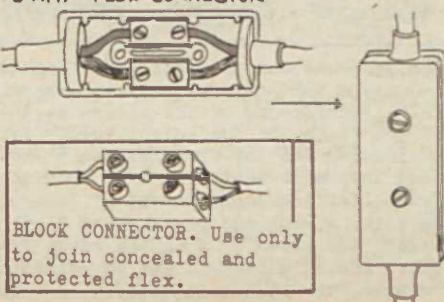
Not only can you break a few bones tripping over flex, but it can also get worn (under carpets) - the wires touch and short the circuit or start a fire.

Have your wire the correct length and where possible fix it along the skirting board with the correct fixing pins, not with metal staples.

lengthening a flex

Technically speaking you should obtain a new piece of flex the right length and fit it to your piece of equipment. Especially in the case of lamps where the flex tends to trail underfoot, often pulled and tripped over.

5 AMP FLEX CONNECTOR.

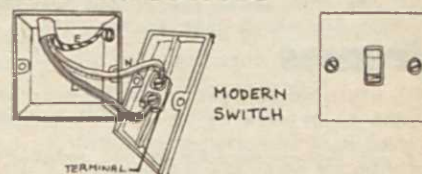


BLOCK CONNECTOR. Use only to join concealed and protected flex.

If no immediate alternative is available at least use the correct flex connector and not insulating tape. Try to ensure that the flex is attached to wall or skirting board and not trailing around. The 5 amp flex connector is for a 2 core SHEATHED flex. (23p)

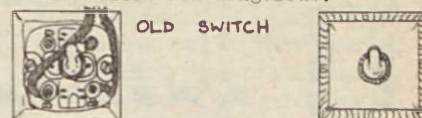
-Push rubber sleeves over the 2 flex ends. Strip off 1/2" of outer sheath, and 1/2" of inner sheath. Connect wires to terminals. COLOUR TO COLOUR and screw casing together.

wall switches



TURN OFF POWER AT MAINS

Trying to install NEW wall switches is specialist work. Replacing old ones is fairly simple provided you have a modern installation. Unscrew switch plate and release N & L wires from terminal on back of switch plate. The EARTH wire should be attached to a terminal inside switch box. Clean and retwist N & L wires and attach to terminal on new switch plate. On old switches you won't necessarily be faced with 3 coloured wires. In this case call an electrician or someone with more experience as wrongly attached wires are dangerous.



ceiling roses

The type of wiring in your ceiling 'rose' depends on 3 things.

- The age of your wiring system,
- whether it is a junction box
- or 'loop-in' wiring (where you are faced with at least 4 flexes joining up, passing from & to next ceiling rose)

- and whether your lamp-holder is metal or plastic. (If metal, a 3 core flex with EARTH must be used to join lamp to ceiling.)

SWITCH OFF POWER AT MAINS, and unscrew rose cover. Note how wires are connected, then unscrew terminals & remove lamp flex. Remove rose or mount and fit a new one. Reconnect wires as they were before. Make sure the lamp flex hangs straight.

Rewiring a junction box or loop-in system is best left to experienced people. Old ceiling mounts are often as awkward. Only renew where you are sure of the wires L to L - N to N..

MODERN CEILING ROSE. WIRES FEEDING FROM A JUNCTION BOX.

SPARE PARTS

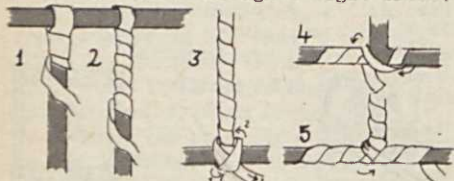
LAMPSHADES

When I recently tramped round the shops quite prepared to actually buy a ready made lamp and shade, I, yet again, returned with a jangling assortment of bits of wire, wood and metal fixtures. It seemed that the only alternative was to resign myself to living in the atmosphere of an office, a victorian drawing room or a space ship. The rack of spider-like,naked frames was far more tantalising, and home made shades are about quarter the cost

frames

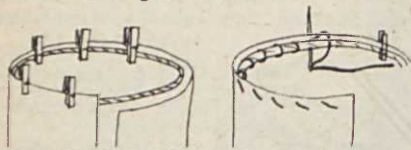
The plain metal ones are cheapest, but ought to be covered or painted against rust.

If you are recovering an old frame, strip off the old shade and clean the staves with wire wool if at all rusty. If you are making a posh shade with some good material it is best to bind the staves and rings with bias tape to which you will stitch the frame. For quicker frames, cover with plastic adhesive tape, buy a plastic coated frame, or paint with enamel/cellulose paint to prevent rusting. Bind the struts first, very tightly, overlapping the tape as it spirals down. Avoid bulky knots or joins as these will show through a tight shade.



coverings

If using fabric, pick one that doesn't fray too badly. A flimsy material should be lined or stiffened with buckram. Plastics, or plastic coated material is easy to use and keep clean. It can be stuck, sewn or thonged depending on stiffness. Below a simple drum shaped shade. The plastic is held in place with clothes pegs while tacked round the upper circle. The side seam can be stuck down. The tacking stitches hidden under trimmings.



Any sort of paper can be used from parchment to tissue paper, provided you don't let it lie too close to the light bulb that will scorch, and eventually cause a fire.

making the shades

The way you make the shade will determine what it looks like more than the shape of the frame. Using the same fabric and frame you can make it in at least four different ways. Fitted, semi-fitted, gathered, and panelled.



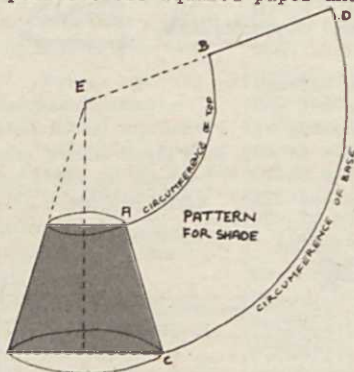
CIRCUMFERENCE OF WAIST

CIRCUMFERENCE OF SKIRT

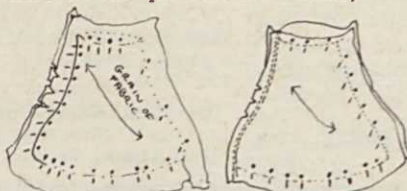
4 PANELS

The pattern for each of these is easily worked out by wrapping thin paper round the frame and creasing it over the staves. Cut your fabric a little wide and allow for seams & hems.

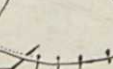
The pattern for a straight sided circular frame can be worked out geometrically if you want it to be perfect. Use squared paper and compass.



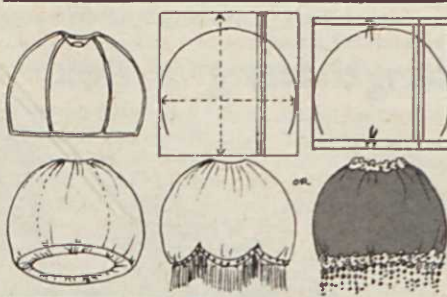
Draw an EXACT silhouette of frame.
Extend the angle of shade upwards to
join with the center line of frame (E)
Place compass on E and draw an arc
from A, and one from C.
The distance A to B is circumference
of top of frame. C to D is circumference
of the base of frame.
Draw a line from E through B to D.
ABDC is the pattern for shade,



CHECK THAT SEAMS ARE
OVER JOE STRUTS.



When making a tightly fitted shade, cut the fabric on the cross. For this shaped frame cut 2 pieces of material to a paper pattern. Pin onto frame pulling tightly and working round from side to side staves. Tack down sides, remove shade & sew up one side. Replace on frame, check by repinning & retacking down other side. Sew up & press. Replace on frame right side out. Pin onto frame & hem top and bottom onto the bias binding on rings.



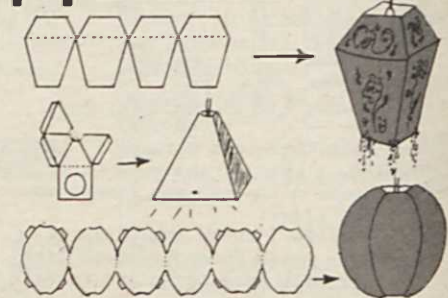
The simplest way to cover this frame is to make a tube of your material, exactly the circumference of the widest part of the frame. On the height, allow for the casing for the elastic, and 3" top and bottom to tuck the shade over the frame (ie: add 4" to height of frame). Make the casing and press seams flat. Thread the elastic. Slip the cover over the frame, tighten and sew up elastic. Decorate the shade with braids, fringes or tassels...



Suitable stiff material used for shades, is woven raffia/rush or split cane that you can get from some craft shops or large stores.

Again, make a pattern from paper and cut out your panels. Any impact glue will hold it, but a few tacking stitches round the staves will help. Cover the joins and scalloped edge with raffia braid, piping...

paper shades

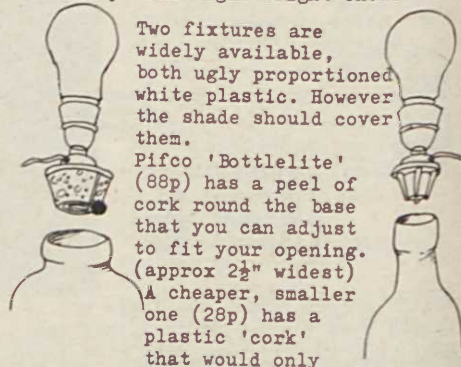


standard lamps

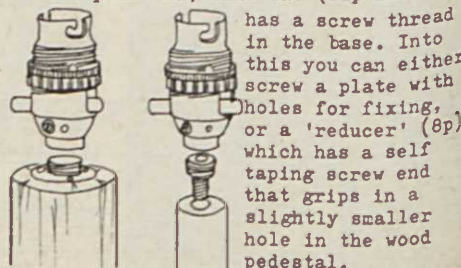
Floor standard lamps seem to be out of favour at the moment, unless of course you return to the victorian drawing room or the space ship.

The problem with making them yourself is finding a long enough pole or rod with a hole for the flex. You can drape it down the side but it doesn't add to the elegance. Very stout bamboo has a centre hole and can be screwed to a wide heavy base.

Bottles and jars are immediate stand-bys, and only require filling with pebbles, ball-bearings, nuts.. for stability with light weight ones.



fit bottle necks. Both these allow for the flex to exit from the lampholder. However, if you can persuade a local glazier to pierce a hole in your bottle, it looks a whole lot better. If you want to attach your holder to a wood pedestal, this one (62p brass)



These BRASS holders must be fitted with a three core flex with earth, for safety

STEPHANIE GILBERT

HOW TO DEAL WITH PROWLERS

'Peeping Toms are just a nuisance to us.' Well thanks officer, you really cheered me up. 'They're quite harmless you know, they only want to look in lighted windows.' ... 'Some women flaunt themselves, not necessarily intentionally, but they undress in front of lighted windows.' ...

These are just some of the reassuring remarks that we heard from our friendly neighbourhood bobby when we asked for advice on dealing with a man who persistently hung around the windows of our ground floor flat, usually late at night when there were no lights on, let alone visions of us stripping off in front of windows ... In fact it was more than hanging around. Just before I moved in to the flat, L, the woman I was to live with rang and told me that a man had broken in through the window and she had woken to find him walking towards her bed. She coped remarkably well and managed to fight him off but was understandably very shaken by the experience. I moved in soon after and there was no trouble for a few weeks although she often heard noises during the night and found it difficult to sleep. Then one morning at about 2 a.m. I was woken up when she came into my room in a state of total hysteria. She was white and trembling and begged me to get up and go upstairs with her to a neighbours flat. She had again heard noises but this time had got up to check on them and pulling aside her curtain had found a man standing on the window sill.

Fear is very easily communicated and from that moment it was quite clear that neither of us could sleep peacefully in our flat until something was done. The next night several friends stayed, again noises were heard. Scuffling and scraping followed by the sound of somebody jumping off something. We did not get up to check on them this time, we decided to do something about it.

In the morning we made a round of all the ground floor flats which backed onto the same alleyway. It is an evil looking place even in the day time and at night it is dead quiet and pitch dark, such a perfect lurking place that we felt sure we couldn't be alone with our problem. We were right, most of the people living on the ground floor had had some sort of

trouble or heard of others having it. One group of four women had called the police on four or five occasions and had the number of the police station permanently beside the 'phone. Most of them were managing to live with it but they were far from happy with the situation.

We decided to get back onto the police. It seemed quite clear that they had had numerous reports from this same area and we in our innocence assumed that they would be happy to help us solve the problem. We suggested that they could write us a letter confirming that the area was dangerous and should be lit at night. We thought that this might help us bring pressure to bear on the council or the landlords to light the alley. Our policeman was cagey. 'It would depend on who was on duty', he said. 'If your letter happened to go to someone who hasn't dealt with calls from this area personally he might not do anything about it.' Then L. came up with a scheme for catching him. She suggested that they should send a couple of men to sit in the flat one night. We would leave a window unlocked and grab him if he came in. I didn't feel entirely comfortable about the idea of police men lurking around the flat but if it would help to make the place habitable again it was worth a try. Our policeman said he was very sorry but it was his last night shift and he couldn't ask anyone else to do it. We could of course ring another policeman the next day, in fact, he would leave a message for some one to contact us. (They never did). He went on to say that it was highly irregular to place policemen inside a flat though had he been in charge he would have done it because they liked a bit of excitement occasionally. He also spent a great deal of time reassuring us about the harmlessness of such men, lighted windows, women flaunting themselves etc. etc. When he left we discussed the matter. It was quite clear that

the police were not the slightest bit interested in the fact that we were frightened. Had he stolen something or damaged property they might possibly have been more forthcoming.

The situation was pretty dismal. Both L. and I were beginning to suffer severely from lack of sleep and shattered nerves. We would jump at the slightest sound, snap at people and burst into tears at the slightest provocation. We were both finding it difficult to work and could think and talk about little else. We considered getting a dog but we knew that feeding it would cost more than feeding us and we'd have to be constantly taking it for walks, we thought about changing all the rooms around so that we would both sleep in the front, that wasn't really practical either. A temporary solution presented itself in the shape of a male friend, large, unruffled and needing a place to stay for a few weeks. I felt that this was rather a cop out but it seemed more practical in the short term to have him move in immediately than for us to take lessons in self defence. There is the added advantage in that he is something of a nocturnal animal. Our neighbours immediately christened him the 'Bull Mastif'.

A week later our prowler paid another visit. He was earlier than usual, possibly because the clocks had just been changed, so we were all up and about, our lodger was out at the time but we had a visitor so there were three of us. Noises were heard, outside my window this time and L. announced 'I'm going out,' and she left out into the alley. He was there alright, an ordinary sort of guy with longish hair and a sheepskin jacket. He looked about 35. I am something of a coward so I pushed our visitor out after her and rang the police. This time they really swung into action. They were there in two minutes flat, picked L. up and roared off after the man who had since disappeared along the

alley. They caught him in high 'Z cars' style just as he was attempting to drive off in a car.

We were high with relief, not untinged with guilt. We knew that he had pleaded guilty to 'Loitering on private property with intent to commit a criminal act.' We also knew that putting him in prison was unlikely to stop him from doing the same thing again as soon as he got out, and that he was probably much more in need of sympathy and care than of punishment, but in our situation it had been a question of him or us.

What did we learn from the experience? Well first we really learnt about friendship and group solidarity. Our friends did not just listen sympathetically, they actively helped us. For nearly a week we camped on other people's sofas or had people stay with us. We drank their whisky and their coffee, probably bored them almost to death by constant discussion of the problem. At no point did anyone suggest that we were behaving unreasonably. Nobody ever said that we should 'pull ourselves together' or learn to live with it. They were certainly very concerned about the state of our nerves but seemed prepared to give us support indefinitely.

We learned that the police feel, generally speaking, that women entice men and that a man who sees a woman in anything less than a full length long sleeved gown, cannot be expected to be responsible for his actions. Most adult males, we are lead to believe, are so completely at the mercy of their genitalia that the sight of a female ankle could drive them into a frenzy.

We discovered that the law does not cover peeping Toms as such but that a number of the looser laws which are usually used for harrassing and detaining long haired youths, black people and gypsies can in fact be applied here. The peeping Tom can be a 'loose and dangerous person,' he can be 'loitering with intent', he can be loitering on private property'. These are all minor offences and will usually be dealt with by 'binding over'. This means he will be fined if he is caught again. If the man is a persistent offender he will probably eventually end up inside.

Prevention is better than cure. I don't like the thought of some guy festering at her majesty's ►

A fishy story

The extraordinary effect of male domination on the Cleaner Wrasse fish reads like a parody of the misunderstanding of the Women's Movement, and the claim that all of its members want to be men.

pleasure with my co-operation. As a treatment it is almost bound to be worse than the disease. These are some of the things that we have done, or ought to do to prevent being harrassed and frightened again.

- 1) Locks on all the windows and bars on some. This is extremely expensive. We have in fact spent over £50 on it but we really feel its worth it, at least nobody can get in without breaking a window and we should be able to hear that and do something about it.
- 2) Lights in the back alley. We haven't got around to it yet but we will. No loiterer is going to hang around in a pool of light.
- 3) Talk to neighbours. If other people are having the same trouble at least you don't feel singled out and that helps to keep paranoia at bay. If neighbours are aware of the problem they are more likely to act when they hear strange noises at night. If you intend to use the police, the fact that a lot of people are involved will certainly help. I'm sure they would not have turned up quite so fast in our case if they had not been alerted by calls from several different neighbours as well as us in the preceding weeks.
- 4) Don't be ashamed of telling other people, or of disturbing them late at night. We all owe each other a little support and there is no point in lying quaking and awake in an empty flat when you could be sleeping soundly on a friendly floor. It is much easier to cope with fear if you've had a good nights sleep.
- 5) Learn some self defence if you possibly can. If you feel able to defend yourself you will not feel frightened.
- 6) In our case catching the guy made a big psychological difference. By confronting him L. stopped seeing herself as a vulnerable woman who was frightened of shadows. He became a real person who was rather ordinary and not particularly menacing and she proved to herself that she was capable of dealing with the situation.
- 7) If you suspect that the man is interested in slightly more than looking in windows you really have no alternative but to contact the police. They probably won't be very helpful but at least they will have been alerted and even if you personally feel quite able to cope with him you do owe some responsibility to the woman next door. Next month I will be dealing with more serious sexual crimes and where the law stands.

Angela Phillips

Dr Ross Robertson and his colleagues at the University of Queensland have been studying the beautiful and varied marine life of the Great Barrier Reef for some years, and Dr Robertson recently described the Cleaner fish in the New Scientist. These fish - so-called because of their habit of eating parasites from the skin and mouths of other fish - are about ten centimetres long and striped black, white and blue. They live in well-defined groups of about 8 to 10 fish, dominated by only one male. All baby cleaner fish are females. The adults are more or less identical except for size. The male is the largest fish in his group and not only mates with the females but 'dominates' them as well, approaching them fiercely with its mouth open - a display that means 'I am the boss'. Further, smaller females give way to larger ones in a continuous pecking order. If all the baby Cleaner fish are females where do the males come from? Dr Robertson removed the male from a group. Within an hour or two, the largest female begun to perform the distinctive male dominance display. This aggressiveness was not just assuming the role of the missing male but a part of actually being male - the first sign of a sex-change which took a few days to complete.

The spontaneous sex-change in Cleaner fish is a total one. The new male can reproduce as a male. All females carry male testes but being on the receiving end of the dominance display inhibits their development. Thus the new male must be quick to dominate all the remaining large females in the group to prevent their changing sex as well. The days when the sex-change is taking place are uncertain for the whole group; if an outside male discovers what is happening it may invade the territory and try to dominate the would-be male. If it succeeds, the sex-change which has begun is reversed and the new male goes back to its female role. The male of a group does not always have to die or be removed for one of the females to change sex.

Occasionally a male may not pay enough attention to one of his larger females. This female then changes sex and forms a new group out of part of the original male's territory.

In spite of the traditional allocation of aggressive qualities to the males of all species, there is only a difference of degree between the roles of male and female Cleaner fish. Aggressiveness is the quality which controls their whole lives and the males have most of it, but the females also have it in smaller amounts, so that the

most aggressive female can take over the male role.

The sex-change system of the Cleaner fish is highly efficient in biological terms - that is, it maximises the creature's rate of reproduction, as the number of males is automatically that required to fertilize all the females. Maximum breeding is characteristic of most stable biological systems but of course it is hardly a desirable objective in human beings.

Dr Robertson's group is not the only one studying the sex lives of tropical fish. Jack Schultz of the University of Connecticut reported a species called the Amazon Molly (A National Science Foundation report) which has no males at all. The Mollys reproduce themselves by borrowing males from closely related species. But the sperm so obtained does not contribute anything to the off-spring, it just starts off the development of the Molly's egg.

Neither the malelessness shown by the Amazon Molly, nor the spontaneous sex-change of the Cleaner Wrasse has ever been observed in mammals. In mammals the female hormone environment within the womb means that maleness has to get off to a quick start or the foetus would be made irrevocably female.

Amrit Wilson

PETER P(OIGN)AN(T)



'Wendy gently kissed his cheek' (Alice B Woodward)

Thousands of parents and children will be doing the rounds of annual Christmas treats this year, and among them is the hardy perennial, *Peter Pan* by J.M. Barrie (Acting Edition published by Hodder and Stoughton, 25p). I never saw the play as a child, and unconsciously assumed that it formed a kind of whimsical and civilised alternative to the rumbustiousness of pantomime, a cross between A.A. Milne and Tolkien. When I took my own children two years ago, I was totally unprepared, therefore, for the pain and emotional insecurity conveyed through the fantasy.

The play is about the Darling family, living in Bloomsbury at the

turn of the century, aspiring to the Victorian middle class, but not quite there. They can manage a maid, but can't afford a real Nanny, so they have a dog to act as substitute. There are three children, Wendy, Michael and John. They are a loving family, Mr and Mrs Darling like rather large children themselves. As Barrie says in the stage directions: 'All the characters, whether grown-up or babies, must wear child's outlook on life as their only important adornment.' The two central messages in the play conflict; on the one hand the desperate refusal to 'grow up', to accept the responsibilities of adulthood, and to prefer the carefree energy and imagination of a child's world (embodied by Peter Pan), and on the other the condition of remaining a child means that you need a loving and devoted mother. Peter Pan has



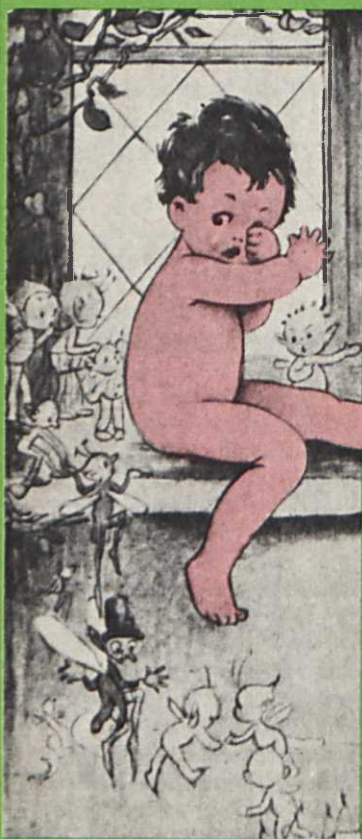
'Wendy, who was very busy mending the children's socks, looked very charming in her pretty brown frock'

opted out of the 'real' world because his mother didn't love him enough, and his Never Never Land (to which he takes the Darling children) is peopled with boys whose mothers also didn't love them enough.

Wendy becomes 'mother' to the lost boys, but as girls will, other feelings for Peter begin to stir; feelings which he rejects, as they involve the beginnings of responsibility and growing up.

Of course there are adventures too - the dreaded Captain Hook (who also wants Wendy for his mother), pirates, redskins. The end is poignant and unresolved; Wendy, as a woman prepared for adulthood, Peter, the boy, stubbornly and arrogantly remaining a child. The play is a great cry of social impotence (male) and frustration and bewilderment (female). While the Darling family remain intact, the problem itself is unresolved. I didn't find it an easy play to see with children, not knowing to what extent the insecurities evoked in the play were affecting them. So if you do go this year, try and discuss the play with the child(ren) afterwards. Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

Micheline Wandor



'The Window was shut and fastened' (Mabel Lucy Atwell)

A fantasy in Five Acts by J.M. Barrie **Act One**

PETER: You mustn't touch me.

WENDY: Why?

PETER: No one must ever touch me.

WENDY: Why?

PETER: I don't know.

Bloomsbury, Winter 1904

Dear Mr Barrie

I did so enjoy Peter Pan, your new play. Please can you tell me if Peter can really fly? Mamma says that if the new baby is a girl she will call her Wendy. Please can you tell me if the Never Land is near Chorlton-cum-Hardy because that is where Grandmama lives and we shall be going there for New Year.

Your Obedient Servant (9)
Robert Swinton (Bobbie, age 9)

Act Two

SLIGHTLY (one of the lost boys in the Never Land): My mother was fonder of me than your mothers were of you. (Uproar.) Oh yes, she was. Peter had to make up names for you, but my mother wrote my name on the pinafore I was lost in. 'Slightly Soiled'; that's my name.

Guildford, Surrey, Winter 1973

My dear Betty

I enclose five tickets for you and the family to see Peter Pan at the Coliseum. Hope you all love it as much as I did the first time I saw it in 1904. Never missed a year till my operation in '67. I believe that wonderful woman Maggie Smith is playing Peter again this year; don't tell the children, but no-one's locked. A dream, she was. Come to that, the whole play is a dream; capital fantasy for this time of the year. Make my words, you won't want to wake up.

Look forward to seeing you all on Boxing Day,
your beloved Papa
Bobbie Swinton

Act Three

WENDY: What are your exact feelings for me, Peter?

PETER: Those of a devoted son, Wendy.

WENDY: I thought so.

PETER: You are so puzzling. Tiger Lily is just the same; there is something or other she wants to be to me, but she says it is not my mother.

WENDY: No, indeed it isn't.

PETER: Then what is it?

WENDY: It isn't for a lady to tell.

The Never Land, 1904-1973

Dear Evelyn Home,

Please can you help me I met this boy who left his shadow in my bedroom and he came back for it and he taught me how to fly and took me and my brothers to the never land where there are all boys whose mothers didn't love them so they went to the never land and they all built me a lovely house so I could be their mother and I am and I make their supper and mend their clothes and give them syrup when they have coughs and Peter is brave and a leader of boys and fought the pirates and killed the dreaded captain hook who looks like my daddy though my daddy is an old softie really and when I grow up and have babies I will love them so hard they won't ever run away from me and dear miss home how can I be sure I love my babies enough?

Yours,

~~James~~ anxious Wendy.
P.S. Peter has a fairy called Tinker Bell who has got very sulky since I came to be his mother and I can't help it if Peter likes me more than he likes her and oh miss home do you think Peter likes me more than he likes her?

Act Four

MR DARLING: ... nobody cuddles me. Oh dear no. I am only the breadwinner. Why should I be cuddled. Why, why why?

MRS DARLING: Peter, where are you? Let me adopt you too.

PETER: Would you send me to school?

MRS DARLING: Yes.

PETER: And then to an office?

MRS DARLING: I suppose so.

PETER: Soon I should be a man?

MRS DARLING: Very soon.

PETER: I don't want to go to school and learn solemn things. No one is going to catch me, lady, and make me a man. I want always to be a little boy and to have fun.

Fleet Street, London 1904-73.

My dear Wendy,

Your tale is all too familiar. Your Peter is just another of those lads who won't grow up and face up to the responsibilities of life. Some men always want to stay boys forever; you and I knew that's a dream, but I'm afraid that if you want to win his love you'll just have to accept being his 'Mum' for the time being. Continue cooking his favourite food and give him all the freedom he wants.

P.T.O.

Eventually he will come to trust you and see that you put his interests before your own.
Yours in sympathy,

Evelyn Home

P.S. Why not buy Tinker Bell a Christmas present, say Chuck Berry's hit single 'Ding-a-Ling'.

Act Five

WENDY: ... so all the children flew away. They flew away to the Never Land, where the lost boys are ... But our heroine knew that her mother would always leave the window open for her progeny to fly back by; so they stayed away for years and had a lovely time. . . (Her triumph is spoilt by a groan from Peter and she hurries to him.) Peter, what is it?

PETER: It isn't that kind of pain. Wendy, you are wrong about mothers. I thought like you about the window, so I stayed away for moons and moons, and then I flew back, but the window was barred, for my mother had forgotten all about me and there was another little boy sleeping in my bed.

Guildford, Surrey, winter 1973

My dear Betty

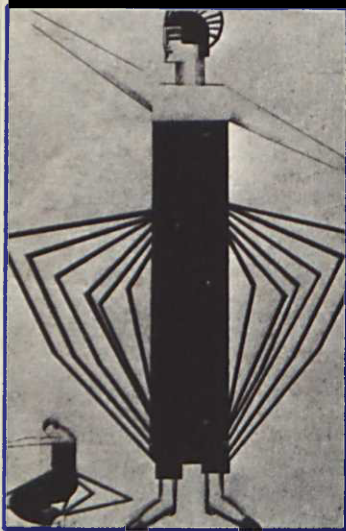
What's this I hear about you not wanting to take the children to see Peter Pan? What on earth's got into you? All this nonsense about Symbolism and hidden "meanings". I've never heard such morbid philosophising. While I'm on the subject, I may as well get something else off my chest. I don't like the way you're bolting up young Bobby and Wendy. He held my piece till now, but there comes a time when you youngsters should listen to your elders and fathers. This play is a bit of fairy land, something out of the ordinary, and none of your high faluting nonsense about Peter being a sexually repressed Victorian, or Wendy with change the plays true nature. Why, you'd be suggesting that because Peter is traditionally played by an actress, the whole play is about a sublimated lesbian relationship. Mind you, I confess that I've always sympathised with Peter; he's a sharp lad and can tell a mile off Wendy wants to make him jump through a wedding ring. If a chap's been decelerated by his father he'd do bloody well to steer clear of women from then on. For once, and for all I don't want to hear anyone say the children a clean feed, at the theatre and afterwards. It's a sad world, full of social chaos, and all these years ago, when Wendy is captured by Captain Hook and he is about to make the boys walk the plank, does she break down like a weak woman? No: she says "Dear boys, I feel that I have a message to you from the English gentlemen."

Of with you, and enjoy yourselves,
your beloved Papa
Bobbie Smitten

Epilogue

WENDY: (To Peter) It is so queer that the stories you like best should be the ones about yourself.

Micheline Wandor



*Leaflet advocating professional training for women workers -
By Gustav Klutsis*



*The factory and the bridge
Olga Rozanova (193)*





Cover Design for a fashion magazine *Liubov Popova*. (1924)



Liubov Popova's design in the form of a collage for Meyerhold's production of the *Magnanimous Cuckold*, (1922). The set construction worked as an independent unit, replacing the stage.



Books

Poetry for Will o' the Wisp Nights

A Strange Girl in Bright Colours
by Carol Rumens, *Quartet*, £1
Midwinter Mandala by Penelope Shuttle, *Headland Publications*,
56 Blakes Lane, New Malden,
KT3 6NX, Surrey 20p.
The Hermaphrodite Album by
Peter Redgrove and Penelope
Shuttle, Fuller D'Arch Smith, £2.50

This has been a difficult review to write, the problem compounded by the nature of the poetry in the second and third books on the above list. The first is a collection of poetry very recognisably about what we define as specifically female experience; child/-girlhood, sexuality, motherhood, the menopause, housewifery. There are also loosely political poems, about Biafra, May Day, even Women's Liberation (the heading to a section). But even so, in spite of the references to the everyday, the poems demand a leisure of concentration, a closeness of attention which at times (now being one) I find hard to give. The soothing phrases of the blurb ('these poems reflect a true awareness of what it means to be a woman, what it really feels like to be female in today's world') belie the difficulty of the carefully wrought expression. Many of Carol Rumens' poems repay the attention, if you have got a couple of silent hours late at night, when your

own everyday has been laid aside; but there seems to be a rift between the experience and the writing ('emotion recollected in tranquillity?') which makes it all rather remote, fodder only for art. The poems are content to be themselves.

Of the other two books, it is even more difficult to speak. The references and images are surreal, free-associative, mystic, cosmic (and here I am also being descriptive . . .). What, for example, does this mean:

I wash my hands in cold water
I walk out of the dirty church

Where do the ragpickers pick rags?
Did the huntsman wear a velvet cap?

The coherence of all these statements is in the mind of the writer - and there is another coherence in the mind of the reader; the two need not necessarily correspond. Again, there are many instances in the two books where images and ideas click and here, but mainly in the interest of their own exercise. And again, the poems will speak to those who have the time for such exercises. In the case of Carol Rumens, the poems are vindicated by the fact that they are explicitly rooted in recognisable experiences. For me they owe too much to readings of Sylvia Plath, without the bite of her bitterness, the energy of her fight. Rumens is into Ecology, taking a leap into the dark - Plath would not have been. But Redgrove and Shuttle sing the sacredness of the poet's role by implication. One has no idea *really* of what life they speak; occasional events spur off their poems - seeing a picture, getting out of bed in the morning. Perhaps the strongest point in their favour is that in *The Hermaphrodite Album* there is no discrimination of authorship; you don't know who wrote which poems. That is at any rate a co-operative achievement, a breaking away from the splendid isolation of the individual artist. But their verbal, imagistic expertise will need to go further in order to speak to most of us who have no time to luxuriate in will o' the wisp nights, who have too little silence around us, and who are too buried by the continuity of occasional events to be able to trampoline into the world of the poem.

Of course, this isn't simply a plea for direct, explicable, *realist* poetry. It is that this particular time for me is one of heavy day-to-day pressures, and this has brought home how detached imagistic poetry such as this can be from the rest of experience. So detached that they cannot be said to enhance it; merely to add another dimension of fragmentation. Finally, of course, we will each have to make the judgement for ourselves; it is not the act of writing (poetry or anything else) which is in question, but the function it serves - both to writer and reader. For the poem/work of art to be an alternative, an escape from the everyday, is to destroy both the value of the escape and the everyday. They cannot be so separated, ultimately. As long as they are, however skilfully written, it will be a question of each of us judging for ourselves - as I said above. This means that the poem goes from isolated individual to isolated individual, separated by the machinery of publishing. Late nights speak to late nights. What about the morning?

Micheline Wandor



George Sand

three generations on both sides of the Atlantic. She has never been half-famous, but often half-understood – and in *Blackberry Winter* she sets herself the task of 'laying her life on the line'.

After an unhappy first year at a coeducational college she switched to an all-girl school because she saw how intelligent women were penalised in a mixed system, and at her new university she was a member of a group of girls whose motto was 'Never break a date with a girl for a man'. When she married at twenty-one she insisted on keeping her own name, and at twenty-three she sailed to Samoa while her husband went to Europe. There she studied the life of adolescent girls, and afterwards wrote *Coming of Age in Samoa*, the first of her many best-sellers, in which she displayed the fine appreciation of the female ethos that make her studies of women so remarkable. In recalling her early life, her portraits of her mother, grandmother, and sisters are warm and loving – as are the accounts of lifelong friendships with women friends. No other anthropologist, and few female writers, have been able to convey the sororal empathy that appears in all her works, and her entry under 'personal life' in the *American Who's Who* is unusually brief – 'one daughter, Catherine Bateson'.

But there were three husbands, and in all cases the partnership seems to have been more of an arrangement than a love match – a bargain where mutual interest in work took the place of the sympathetic understanding of her female relationships. Of her second marriage she said 'if we are to have a world in which women work beside men . . . in which both men and women can contribute their best, women must give up pandering to male sensitivities' – and when it came to her third husband, they had a trial period of working together; 'he made the completion of this book a

prerequisite to our getting married – proof that he would be able to accomplish the kind of work he wanted to do if we worked together'. All of the marriages ended in divorce, but it is difficult to tell whether it was a failure of personalities – or a case of the general proposition that work-based arrangements do not work.

Kaori O'Connor

The First Sex Elizabeth Gould Davis Dent £2.95

In a lively, ball-cutting book which delivers its punches with verve and imagination Elizabeth Gould Davis chronicles the glory of an ancient civilization in which women were 'the first sex', the rulers, priestesses and scholars, and men mere sexual adjuncts who ritualistically sacrificed their penises and later their foreskins to the great mother goddess. On the basis of rather flimsy evidence the author speculates that this matriarchy colonized the entire world at one time but was almost completely obliterated by the climatic changes which resulted from the recession of the glaciers 10,000 years ago (why should this highly sophisticated civilization have disappeared almost without material traces when remains of very primitive human societies two million years old still exist?). Davis believes that the survivors of this ancient matriarchy implanted their civilized forms in Thrace, an area between the Black and Aegean Seas, and later (6,500 B.C.) in Anatolia (present day Turkey). These latter day revivals of a more ancient matriarchy reached their height in Minoan or Cretan civilization (3,000 to 1,500 B.C.); other historians have emphasized the feminine character of Minoan art, the Minoans' open and easy sexuality (only patriarchal society prizes virginity), and the total absence

of art glorifying martial values – all characteristics, Davis believes, of the ancient matriarchy. The Sumerians, Egyptians, Mycenaeans, Ionians, and the Celts had matriarchal societies as well, Davis argues, and bore the cultural imprint of the earliest female civilization.

Christianity, however, ended the equality of the sexes (Davis argues that even in male-dominated classical Greece and Rome women enjoyed a high status). St. Paul, especially, was responsible for imposing Judaic misogyny on Western civilization. Davis describes in clinical detail such practices of the patriarchal period as female circumcision and infibulation (the painful scraping and sewing together of the labia to prevent loss of virginity) imposed by men eager to revenge centuries of subordination and to impose the rule of force over the physically weaker but spiritually and intellectually superior women (Davis argues that the Y chromosome which produces males is "a deformed and broken X chromosome – the female chromosome" – indeed probably a mere genetic error). She reminds us, however, that even during the darkest period (for women) of Western civilization individual women, whose names have been scrupulously suppressed or forgotten by male historians, such as the legendary Pope Joan, remained a force in history and managed to humanize oppressive and exploitative male institutions.

As is evident from even so cursory a summary, it is difficult to comment critically on a book which covers so immense a time span and is frequently based on imaginative conjecture. I remain unconvinced by Davis' argument for a prehistoric matriarchy. As Davis and others have shown, women probably were the first agriculturalists and invented most of the civilized arts (cooking, pottery-making, weaving) during the Neolithic Age; this fact together with the importance given to a fertility goddess and to the reproductive powers of women in prehistoric societies could account for the very high status still enjoyed by women in some of the Bronze Age successors to Neolithic society.

Matriarchy implies rule by women, and in most of the Bronze and Iron Age societies described by Davis women ruled infrequently. Matrilineal inheritance which was practised in some of these societies, anthropologists tell us, is not synonymous with female power; indeed property may remain in the hands of the mother's brother. Furthermore, matriarchy as Davis understands it, is not based on a particular socio-economic structure but is associated with certain spiritual values, namely, an aversion to unnecessary violence and exploitation of other human beings – values which spring from the mothers' interest in the preservation of their off-spring. Not only did the societies which Davis describes never share such peaceful, humane values but also in linking these spiritual values to the rule of women, Davis reverts to the pernicious deduction of psychology from biology which contemporary feminists have so conclusively challenged. Like Valerie Solanas and the founders of S.C.U.M. (Society for Cutting up

Margaret Mead *Blackberry Winter* Angus & Robertson hardback £3.50

"It's hard to have a mother who is half-famous" said Catherine Bateson, aged ten. "Why?" asked Mother. "Because, when I assume that people know who you are, so often they don't." Mother is Margaret Mead, the American anthropologist who has been 'lambasted and lampooned, lionized and mythologized, called an institution and a stormy petrel' by



George Sand, again, neither picture is in the book reviewed but they were too good not to use.

DOWN AMONG THE WOMEN

Susan's mother murmured a languid prophecy about the consequences of marrying an older man, but forgot to do so until after the ceremony. She cared that her children should reflect credit on her: she did not care for her children. She did not care for her husband; she did not care for life itself. She played bridge and caught 'flu, and waited for life to pass her by in as comfortable and orderly a way as possible. So Susan now realizes, sitting and waiting for the heaving Scarlet to emerge, wondering why she cannot after all be like other people as she had so hoped to be.

Poor Susan.

Lucky Susan. . .

. . . Scarlet comes out of the bathroom.

'Why were you so long?' asks Susan.

'I don't know,' complains Scarlet. 'I want to go but I can't.'

Susan had not wanted so precise an answer.

'I'll be off now,' says Scarlet brightly.

'Are you sure you'll be all right?' asks Susan, who simply wants her out of here, quick, before Kim returns.

'Yes,' says Scarlet, who isn't.

'I'm sorry you missed Kim,' says Susan. 'Give him a ring and come round some time when you're feeling better.'

'Well,' says Scarlet. 'Tell him I came. Tell Daddy I was here.' It is the best she can do by way of attack.

'I will,' says Susan, and practically pushes Scarlet out of the door. She shuts it and puts up the chain. She goes and lies down on the bed. She closes her eyes. She wishes she was single again. She wishes she was not pregnant. She wishes she could go and drink some coffee without being sick. She wishes there was someone, anyone in the whole world she could trust. She does not want Kim to come home. He is too real for her now; his past has been going on too long: he has accrued too much strength from it. She sees him as a walking jigsaw, and every piece has been left by some other person, some other event, of which she knows nothing. And this monstrous jagged stranger, her husband, lies nightly like an incubus in the dark beside her, inserts his being into her, and grows his child within her. . .

. . . Scarlet has got half-way down the stairs. She goes no further. She crouches on the stairs and groans. Here, returning, Kim finds her. He thinks she is a stranger, and is kind. He is a kind man.

Helping her up the stairs, he is not conscious that this flesh is of his flesh. Why should he be?

Kim is the envy of his pot-bellied friends. They are conscious of mortality; not he. He has pushed back the barriers of decline by twenty years or so. He has a young wife; he is starting again. Kim is slim, casual and happy.

Kim has known trouble in his time. He has known Wanda, and escaped. He has grieved for the loss of his daughter, and recovered. He has known fame, success, and wealth, and what it is to lose these blessings. He has been whirled to the centre of the world's affairs, and been for a time at its still, magic fulcrum: then flung out again, cold and penniless, to the crowded anonymity of the perimeter. . .

. . . When he first sees Scarlet on the stairs he thinks for a terrible moment it is Susan. He feels bad about lying to the client's wife, and expects retribution. Seeing it is not Susan, but someone far more mountainous, he is relieved. The groans of this stranger, he feels, are, though disturbing, at least not his fault. *Continued on p 46*

◀Men) Davis would reverse the roles of dominator and dominated in her future society. Women would then assume their 'natural' (biologically determined?) role, which they once held, as the rulers and creators of civilization. As a feminist I hope for a world in which all human beings work, play, and love untrammelled by sexual stereotypes imposed by a ruling sex, be it male or female.

Instead of examining the relationship between socio-economic forces and patriarchy or the sexual oppression of women Davis selectively chooses isolated cultural phenomena to substantiate her thesis. Not surprisingly then, she is more concerned with the lives and fortunes of female rulers and educated, upper-class women who were more likely to have been free from sexist constraints, than with the lives of ordinary women.

Davis' book is unabashedly ethnocentric. 'The first sex', we are told was fair, red-headed, and blue-eyed like the Celts who, Davis speculates, may have been their direct descendants. Except for passing mention

Davis ignores the patriarchal revolution in the non-Western world, presumably because it does not fit her theory that the Judao-Christian ideology is the main culprit in the subjection of women. One can only wonder at her glib assertion that black women have always had equality with men in civil rights movements and at her failure to perceive that their position in America as heads of families and as income providers is a result of their poverty, and the conditions of economic survival which have always forced poor women to lead lives that contradicted the prevailing male ideal of female chastity and passive submission.

The foregoing criticisms are not meant to stop you reading Davis' book, which contains a wealth of valuable mythological and archeological material on women's status in ancient society, but to caution against the creation of a spurious myth of the golden age of patriarchy which is as false as the patriarchal myth of women's timeless subjection to men.

Alexandra Weinbaum

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Women in Music

Marion Fudger

A conference for women in rock music was held by Melody Maker on October 25th. It was the first step towards understanding the position of women in the music business today and though we couldn't always provide the answers, at least we clarified the areas which needed improvement.

Ideally, there should have been a wider spectrum of womens' involvement with music represented, but the demands of the business inevitably kept some women from coming. Robert Partridge representing Melody Maker, was responsible for the original idea, the co-ordination, and later attempting to transcribe the five hours of tape recorded dialogue. Those who took part were: Elkie Brooks singer with Vinegar Joe, Marsha Hunt, Yvonne Elliman leading lady in Jesus Christ Superstar, Maddy Prior singer with Steeleye Span, Susie Watson-Taylor manager of Incredible String Band, and myself.

We began by trying to determine the reason for the great lack of women in music, but found that as in all other areas where women are noticeably absent, it is the female role, played out from birth, which robs them of motivation. Those women who do make some headway have little confidence as they are not taken seriously, and the time spent constantly having to prove themselves delays their success or deters them completely.

We agreed that the power of the music press plays a large part in making or breaking an artist - female or male. The music papers which grew up around musicians and artists, initially fulfilled an informative role. There has been a gradual reversal, resulting in the musicians clamouring around the press, hungry for publicity. The aspect of the press which needs changing (quite apart from the fact that 99% of their staff is male) is the criticism. Critics and reviewers should be made to realise their great responsibility to the reading public, as the majority of the public tend to believe a criticism is not just one persons point of view, but that it is backed up by the paper that it appears in. Women are possibly more vulnerable to the effect of an unfavourable review because of their underlying insecurities.

More sex - more space

We also felt that the music press helps perpetuate a vicious circle which chains women to their sexual image. On the whole, public awareness of women in music comes from the music papers. Their criteria for coverage is dictated by a woman's sexual image rather than her talent. More sex - more space. This phenomenon results in a lack of publicity for many talented women. Pop, being an immediate business, demands an instantly identifiable image, therefore once the press has given the public a standard of image to expect, the artist is forced to not only maintain that

standard, but to upgrade it for further press coverage, resulting in more bookings and success.

Elkie: 'I've been singing ever since I can remember in the business, but until I started putting myself across sexually - wearing splits up the side and little bikini tops, nobody wanted to know. In some ways I feel quite bad about it.'

Mary Hopkin is an example of the only other pigeon hole for women in music. The passive feminine role. Respect for her individuality went by the board as the media presented her as England's sweetheart - a naive country hick. Women need the freedom to develop their own individual image, in order to escape either the traditional female stereotype or the apeing of the male stereotype.

Marsha: 'Women are very much in the same situation as blacks have been for a long time, you've got to slip in through the side door as the statutory representative and once you get in, then do your damage, but you're kidding yourself if you think you're going to get in on your terms.'

Who controls the market?

Few women were responsible for any changes in music. During the 50's there were many solo female vocalists, but the arrival of groups pushed them back. Women weren't

experienced as musicians.

Basically they were a product created to fill a commercially viable gap in the music market. Again, during the 60's, women were exploited whilst they were trying to become involved in the music industry, the media image of them was middle of the road senseless dollies, singing lyrically meaningless songs. Tamla Motown's success was female based, they commercialised black female vocalists on a large scale. Their superficial image was coy and predictable and has been kept that way in order to preserve the multi-million dollar industry which they created. However, the current music business attitude is that women artists do not make money, on the whole their albums don't sell. Though on the other hand, the female buying market is the strength of commercial success - Osmonds/Cassidy/Gary Glitter. The industry creates artists who satisfy the young female fans who make the superstars. So in an obscure way they control their market. The industry has capitalised on the fact that young girls approaching adolescence need symbols with which to identify and form emotional relationships.

Mother and artist?

For women it's talent and endurance that win out, but a risk along the way is pregnancy. The business is not orientated to

children and motherhood for an artist comes hard. Elkie has decided not to have children for the time being, as she feels she could not do both to the standard that she would wish. Marsha is trying to be both mother and an artist. She explained that it would now be impossible to go on the road for long tours, and be up at six thirty and see her child to school each day. Once she'd made the decision to have her baby, she then had the hard job of explaining to the people who were artistically and financially dependent on her that they were out of a gig. Surely men would not be prepared to cope with so much. Contraception is not the answer because women should freely choose whether or not they want to have children. Only when adequate provision is made for children will more women be free to develop and succeed musically.

Who manages who?

Susie knows of only three other women managers, here again is a situation where it would be impossible to put in the necessary hours if one had children. She was a personal manager for a year, then when the group's manager left, she took over. 'I didn't think - can a woman do this job, my only worry was experience. More women ought to wake up to the fact that they do have inherent abilities which they've been

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conditioned into thinking they haven't got - or through education have thought was a man's job, all you have to do when you actually look at it, is to duplicate something which is happening before you.'

We looked at the role of personal managers more closely, didn't Yoko Ono fulfil that role for John Lennon, June for Marc Bolan, Angie for David Bowie? We wondered how many women lost their percentage in an emotional relationship. On the other hand, many women are managed by their husbands, and they all pick up their twenty percent. Few women in history have not been conditioned into playing an emotional secondary role (the courtesan who actually ruled the French court), but when it comes down to it, she gets no credit, no names in the papers, no money. It is difficult

though, if an emotional/personal relationship starts before the manager role, how then can a woman ask for her dues, she probably doesn't even see that she is gradually becoming part of a business relationship too.

Fans are not groupies

Are groupies an indication of sexism in the pop business? Are the only present existing roles for women in the business, fans, groupies and a few artists? Groupies, having caught the 'bug' of the business, use their sexuality to become involved. Fans are not groupies. A groupie is someone who frequents groups, not because they respect their art or idolise them as a fan would, because they move from group to group. The plastercasters weren't in there because someone had a good record. Yet there are very few

male groupies. Young guys are mainly intimidated by feminine success. Men artists who are established become male groupies - they are in a position to approach you. Any guy off the streets won't have balled six women artists, women make themselves less susceptible to it, because they feel sexually exploited anyway. Women consciously want to please other women musically, not just men. A woman's upbringing and her orientation to sex does not result in her wanting to ape the male sexual attitude to women. But it is interesting that considering the male/female stereotypes, when it comes to show business, the roles reverse, the groupies take the active role. Also, given the sexist lyrics of most songs, why do female fans continue to idolise the bands, and why do groupies continue to knock on

the dressing room doors after the show?

Of course, there are groupies in all aspects of life and industry, but in the pop business it has been brought out into the open and recognised as a fact. Therefore, having recognised it, we can now try to understand the reasons why a woman puts herself in that position, and exactly what that position is.

The whole hierarchy of contacts throughout a female artist's career are men, and because she has to be stronger and more talented than a man to make it, it is not surprising that she uses what she sees as the only card in her favour - her sexuality. There is nothing wrong with sex - but there is more to a woman than her sexuality, we want to see women artists given the respect they so badly need and richly deserve for their musical ability ■

DOWN AMONG THE WOMEN

continued from page 43

They have gone but two steps upwards – she is very heavy and seems to have little instinct for self-help – when they are overtaken by Mr Joseph Justice, who has received a garbled message from his recording machine. The tape was set at the wrong speed and the words cannot be deciphered but he has recognized the timbre of his patient's voice and come at once.

Together they make better speed. They find the door on the chain and Kim rattles, shakes and shouts to wake Susan, who staggers to open it.

A three-part monster enters her home. She can make little sense of it at first. One speaks, crossly. It is her husband's voice.

'Why in God's name was it on the chain?'

She sees, now. Her doctor, her husband, her stepdaughter, united in monstrosity.

'Shall I ring for an ambulance?' her husband is asking.

'Too late for that,' her doctor replies. 'Get her in to the bed.'

Susan tries to stop them; she tugs and drags at the lumbering heap.

'You can't,' she cries, 'you can't!'

Her husband, horrified, shakes her off.

'You don't understand,' moans Susan, 'it's your daughter. It's Scarlet.'

Kim, though shaken, is deflected only for a moment. As for Mr Joseph Justice, he's delighted. He thrives on the bizarre.

Susan sits and cries in her chair while her stepdaughter's child is delivered in the bed prepared for her child. It is Susan's doctor who smiles his expensive smile at the wrong mother and means it, for Scarlet is too terrified even to moan and so get mistaken for a brave good mother.

And who will pay the bill? Why, Susan's husband. He paces the room, consumed with rage, at Susan, at the world, at everyone.

Bitterness against Wanda, which he thought was dead, has been foxing him, lying dormant. Now once again it is seeking out the old pathways. Kim finds himself anxious: but then Wanda was always good at making him anxious: there is a pain in his chest: when he was with Wanda he was always in pain. And Wanda would infect him with the expectation of disaster – moral, financial, emotional, political and practical – and thus make him aware that he had always feared, somehow invited, calamity. Now she has sent this emissary, this daughter, yet surely no part of him, here to torment him and complicate his future.

He cannot find words to talk to Susan. She is too young. She cannot, will not understand. Look at her now, pouting and grizzling, incapable of any serious emotion.

In the bedroom Mr Joseph Justice holds Byzantia up by the heels and slaps her on the bottom. There is no need for it, since she is breathing perfectly well, but the gesture seems to reassure his patient. Besides, it is traditional. 'Take that,' says the doctor, in effect. 'And that! See if you enjoy it either!'

Byzantia cries.

'It's a girl,' he says to Scarlet.

'You're lying,' she says.

'A grand daughter for you, Mr Belcher,' sings out Mr Justice through the open door, hoping for a more reasonable response.

But there is silence. Susan stares at her old, old husband; and he stares into his soul and sees that it is no longer young.

'Say something,' whines Susan presently.

'Splendid, splendid,' he calls back to Mr Justice, which was not what she had hoped for.

'I could do with some help,' says Mr Justice, 'what's the matter with you both?'

'Go on,' says Kim, 'you're a woman.'

'You go,' says Susan. 'It's your daughter. It's nothing to do with me.' It is the first time she has defied him.

'I'm sorry about it,' he manages to say, 'but you knew when we married that Scarlet existed. I hid nothing. I wasn't to know she'd turn up.'

But he can't say anything right.

'You can't just shift the responsibility now,' says Susan. 'Go on in there.'

'I'm a man,' he says. 'It's no place for a man. Did she say who the father was?'

'No.'

'Didn't you ask?' His voice makes clear what a fool he thinks her.

'No, I didn't. I'm not supposed to be upset. In case you've

forgotten, I'm having a baby any minute. Not that I suppose you care now. You've got a grandchild, haven't you? A girl too. What you wanted.'

It is true. He has longed for a girl. They both have. To replace the baby Scarlet torn from him so many years ago by Witch Wanda. Scarlet is back now in the adult flesh, groaning, bleeding, space-consuming, troublesome. He doesn't, frankly, want any kind of baby any more.

He puts his arms round Susan. He lies bravely. 'Never mind,' he says. 'Never mind, It's your baby I want. Our baby.'

But Susan can only respond with petulance. She shakes him off, as her mother did to her, unforgiving, punishing. Twelve (waking) hours without talking for a minor offence: twenty-four (waking) for a major. Then a timed and calculating smile. Susan's face is set and cross. Kim is disappointed and fears for the first time the triviality of their future together. He takes away his arms, forlorn. He remembers the girl he left his coffee client with – as pretty as Susan, he thinks, and twice as generous, pleased only to give and be given pleasure. Why, the world is full of them. Full of pretty girls. What is the difference between one and another?

Susan's hand creeps into his. His tightens over hers. Then he goes in to help Mr Justice. She calls after him.

'Kim.' He pauses. 'Well?'

'I think perhaps I should have my baby in hospital,' she says, hoping to drive home to him the enormity of the situation. But all he says is, 'Yes. Perhaps you should.'

Susan is hurt. She cries afresh. She hears someone coming up the stairs. The front door still stands open. Wanda comes in. She too has had a garbled message of desperate phone calls, and has come searching for her daughter.

Susan knows without being told that this is Wanda. And she in her folly has summoned her. Susan makes no move. It is all too terrible. Wanda looks at her briefly, appears to dismiss her.

'Where is she?'

'In my bedroom,' says Susan.

'Is there a doctor?' asks Wanda, making towards the bedroom door.

'Yes. My doctor. And my husband's in there too.'

Wanda takes time off duty to smile a rare appreciative smile, and then goes into the bedroom.

'It's born,' says Susan, after her. 'It's a girl.'

How lucky, Susan thinks, to be Scarlet. Scarlet has everything, and deserves nothing. Susan wants her mother. Susan cries. Susan has a pain.

'I'm going to have a baby,' she says into the shambles of her life.

Susan has a slow and difficult labour. It lasts forty-two hours. She is taken to hospital because it seems simpler to the others than to turn Scarlet out so instantly, and besides, nothing at home is now ready for Susan. There is a 'flu epidemic at the hospital. They are short-staffed – Susan's in the ante-natal ward (no visiting, thank you) for thirty-five hours, with sporadic attention, then moved into the labour room. Here the system loses touch with her. She lies alone on a high hard narrow couch for six hours, forgotten. She rings the bell but no one comes.

They have gone to tea. She is afraid of moving for fear of falling off the couch. Time passes. The pains intensify until, each time, she is on the verge of fainting, then diminish, bringing her, as might some skilled torturer, back to full consciousness and ready for the next application. Presently she screams, though it scarcely seems to be her who is making this shattering noise. Someone comes running. Figures cluster and move. There is a feeling, she gathers, against anaesthesia. She strikes out at someone. Simeon dives into the world. She is surprised. She has forgotten she is here to have a baby. She has fifteen stitches; her legs strung up to poles specially devised to be fitted to the ends of maternity beds. She gets fearful cramps in her legs – there is a delay, a queue of women, legs strung in preparation for the student stitcher – while she waits, and thinks the pains are almost as bad as the earlier ones. But of course they aren't.

Poor Susan. Lucky Susan. Her mother, oddly, comes to visit her, almost immediately. She studies the poor lopsided little baby – Simeon was much distorted on his leisurely journey out, though of course the condition will right itself. Or so Susan has been told. Susan's mother speaks.

'Still, he's all right, isn't he? You never know, when the father's getting on in years. I was so worried.'

When Kim comes to visit her, Susan can hardly remember who he is.

Fay Weldon. First published by Heinemann, now in Penguin 35p.

LI SHUANGSHUANG.

Xiwang, Li Shuangshuang's husband, has been elected work points recorder. On the first day of the new system Xiwang, Sun You and several others undertake to spread manure on a freshly planted wheat field. They start to complain.



60. Just at this moment an empty truck came by. Jin Qiao immediately recognized the driver as Xiao Wang, a long-distance truck driver, and waving and shouting, he ran to the road. "Xiao Wang, where are you going? Stop and have a rest—have a drink of water."



61. The truck stopped at the side of the road beside the pile of manure. Jin Qiao poured out a bowl of water and led Xiao Wang to a shady spot and began chatting. Sun You came up behind the truck and took a look and thought to himself that if the driver would help, they could have the manure spread in no time.



62. He then told this excellent idea to Jin Qiao who said, with some embarrassment, as soon as he'd thought it over, "Right away! Xiao Wang, how about bringing the manure to the field on the truck for us?" At first Xiao Wang was unwilling, but later he was unable to withstand Jin Qiao's mixture of pleading and threats; he could only agree.



63. They had the manure on the truck in no time. The truck slowly drove around the field. Sun You and the others stood on the back scattering the manure.



64. The assigned eight mu were completed in the twinkling of an eye. Sun You and the rest took out their work-point books for Xiwang to mark in the work points. Xiwang generously recorded ten points for each of them, even putting ten points down in Sun You's book.



65. At this moment Shuangshuang and the other women were in the cotton fields deciding on their work points. Finally they came to Da Feng, and Sun Youpo was the first to express an opinion. "She spent the whole afternoon clearing up six rows. Give her five points."



66. "I don't agree!" interrupted Shuangshuang immediately. "We shouldn't only take into account speed, but also consider quality." So saying, she pointed to a row of cotton flowers. "Look, she did those rows without getting rid of all the weeds, which means that later on there will be fewer bolls!"



67. One of the team members came forward to solve the situation. "Give four points!" "Four points is all right," said Shuangshuang, "as long as she comes back in the afternoon to do the rows over again." Da Feng couldn't restrain her anger. "I don't need the work points—I've still got my parents!" and turning on her heel, she left.



68. Neither Gui Ying nor You Fang's wife were content with Da Feng and they hurriedly returned home to eat. Shuangshuang was furious as she stayed behind to redo the rows which Da Feng had done.

More next month.

GLADYS KNIGHT AND THE PIPS

NEW ALBUM

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